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Skittles and Smarties: Dangerous Teen Trends

Everyone is familiar with the popular candies Smarties and Skittles but a new trend in teen behavior is putting a spin on these sweets. Teens are finding new ways to mimic dangerous behaviors. It is a normal developmental stage of teens to experiment with risk and curiosity to establish an identity, but bringing these new trends to the awareness of parents and teachers will help keep them safe. Stay up to date with these new trends and keep involved with the teens in your life to minimize any at-risk behavior. Below, you will find more information about **Smoking Smarties** and **Skittling**.

Skittling

In comparison, Skittling has more severe health risks, both long term and short term. It involves the abuse of common cold medicines, such as Coricidin and as a matter of fact, doesn't involve Skittles at all. The term Skittling comes from the shape and color of the Coricidin capsules. They are commonly bright red and resemble the Skittles candy. Additionally, they are taken by the handful and are ingested as generously as candy. The ingredient teens crave in cold medicine is dextromethorphan, or DXM. What is the risk with consuming such high dosages of DXM? In low dosages, teens may feel intoxicated, resembling the symptoms from drinking alcohol. In higher dosages, possibilities include speech impairment, lethargy, seizures, loss of consciousness, loss of physical control, hallucinations and other signs of psychosis. DXM is not considered dangerous if taken as directed, which typically includes not exceeding four tablets in a 24-hour period. But some teens today are swallowing 4 to 12, or as many as 24 tablets at a time. As tolerance increases, a higher dosage is craved until the teen feels the desired effects. To increase the effects, and also the severity, teens are sometimes using alcohol simultaneously.



Reports of teens engaging in these dangerous behaviors have included emergency room and hospital visits, and in psychotic cases, the use of restraints on a gurney. Reportedly, one teen is in need of a liver transplant due to DXM abuse. Other teens have checked into rehab and withdrawals can be expected at different levels of addiction. When mixed with antihistamines and pain relievers, even death can result.

Coricidin is available over-the-counter. It is legal and cheap, which makes it easily accessible to teens. That's why it is so important for parents and teachers to be involved. If your teens are purchasing cold medicine or have tablets resembling Skittles in their possession but have no cold symptoms, please take this warning into consideration. If you see any displays of the side effects listed above or suspect DXM abuse, please seek professional assistance to keep these teens safe.

Smoking Smarties

Smarties aren't just for a sweet treat anymore. Young teens and pre-teens are now "smoking" the tart, compressed powdery candy. How? With the candy still wrapped, it is crushed against something hard, like a table or book. Once it has turned to a powder, one end of the wrapper is cut off and is "smoked" like a cigarette or marijuana joint. It is never lit, but the gesture mimics smoking. Several young teens have posted how-to videos online and with the use of the internet, there are step-by-step instructions available. The powder is sucked into the mouth and blown out of the mouth or nose. Some teens have perfected this and practice blowing rings while others actually snort the powder up the nose, mimicking the use of cocaine. Though it may sound harmless, several risk factors are involved. One is the possibility that a teen may aspirate the wrapper or chunks of the candy which would create a choking hazard. Another possibility is that frequent use could cause infections, even maggots, which feed on the sugary dust inside the nose. Additionally, the gesture of smoking or snorting may be a gateway to substance use, such as tobacco, marijuana or cocaine.



Reportedly, young teens and pre-teens are engaging in this behavior at home in front of their parents and at school during lunch. School districts are banning this type of conduct because it is a choking hazard, but also because of the predictability that it may lead to cigarette or drug use.

"DXM Abuse: It Starts at Home". January 28, 2008. *Associated Content*. Retrieved online April 9, 2009 from http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/556323/dxm_abuse_it_starts_at_home.html?cat=5
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