

“Syrup” and “Molly” on the rise



A recent publication by the NIDA (National Institute of Drug Abuse) indicates two new emerging commonly abused substances: “syrup” and “molly”.

They indicate that drinking prescription-strength cough syrup containing codeine and promethazine mixed with soda was referenced frequently in rap music beginning in the late 90s and has now become increasingly popular among youth in several areas of the country. Users commonly refer to the drug as “syrup,” “purple drank”, “sizzurp”, and/or “lean”. The codeine in these cough syrups is an opioid that can produce relaxation and euphoria when consumed in sufficient quantities. Also, promethazine is an antihistamine that also acts as a sedative. Sometimes users flavor the mixture with the addition of hard candies.

“Syrup” poses a risk because it contains codeine. Codeine and other opioids present a high risk of fatal overdose due to their effect of depressing the

central nervous system, which can slow or stop the heart and lungs. Often, users mix “syrup” with alcohol, which greatly increases this risk. Deaths from prescription opioid medications now outnumber overdose deaths from all other drugs (including cocaine and heroin). Interestingly, codeine-promethazine cough syrup has been linked to the overdose deaths of some prominent rap musicians.

Next, drug users have named “Molly” — slang for “molecular” — is a pure crystalline powder form of the club drug MDMA (3-4 methylenedioxymethamphetamine) which in pill form is known as ecstasy. The NIDA also reports that abuse of this drug is on the rise. “Molly”, which is usually purchased in capsules, has seen a surge in interest in the past few years, also reportedly often abused by popular music artists. The NIDA reports that MDMA in any form produces energy and euphoria in users but also may dangerously affect body temperature and cause confusion, depression, and sleep problems.

Users may be seeking out “Molly” to avoid substitutes known to be commonly found in pills sold as ecstasy, such as caffeine, methamphetamine, and other harmful drugs. But those who purchase what they think is pure MDMA as Molly may actually be exposing themselves to the same risks. Hundreds of “Molly” capsules tested in two South Florida crime labs in 2012, for example, contained methylone, a dangerous stimulant commonly found in “bath salts”. Reports have also indicated that “Molly” capsules have been found containing cocaine, heroin, and other substances.