

# ALERT!

## Purple Drank



**T**HE ILLEGAL RECREATIONAL USE OF PRESCRIPTION cough syrup mixed with soft drinks or power drinks as a way to get high has become popular in many parts of the United States, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

“Purple Drank” is a mixture of prescription cough syrup containing promethazine and codeine with soda or energy drinks, as well as Jolly Ranchers and ice. The cocktail usually has a purple color from dyes in the cough medicine, and also goes by the names of: Drank, Lean, Southern Lean, SIRR, Sizzurp, Sir, Purple Oil, Urrple Durrple, Purple Stuff, Dat Drank, Purple Tonic, Texas Tea, Oil, Memphis Mud, and Barre, among others. Alarming, the original mixture is evolving into a more dangerous combination by the substitution of soda pop for alcohol, and by the addition of other ground opiates and benzodiazepines to the drink.

According to a 2004 survey conducted by the University of Texas, 8.3% of Texas secondary school students reported having taken enough codeine syrup to get high. This trend began in the late 1990’s, originating in the Houston, Texas rap and hip-hop scene. Hip-hop artists such as Three 6 Mafia helped to popularize Purple Drank, along

with rap disc jockey DJ Screw—who died of a Purple Drank (codeine) overdose in 2000. More recently, rapper Pimp C’s December 2007 death was determined by the Los Angeles County Coroner’s office to be an accidental overdose of Purple Drank (promethazine with codeine syrup).

In a 2006 article on Purple Drank, *USA Today* reported that “the misuse of prescription syrups is ‘a huge trend. We’ve seen more of it in the last few years than we’ve ever seen before. We see a lot of kids getting hold of it’ by ordering from online pharmacies that accept unverified prescriptions and identification.

DEA agents say the demand for the illicit syrup has sent its price

soaring. Syrup that typically sells for \$12 a pint that is stolen or obtained illegally from pharmacies and warehouses often is sold to street dealers for about \$300 a pint, dealers then sell it by the ounce to users for \$40-\$85—or \$640-\$1,360 a pint.”

Purple Drank produces a feeling of euphoria and causes motor skill impairment that makes users move slowly or lean over (hence the drinks’ nickname “Lean”).

The deadly misconception among many Purple Drank users is that because its main ingredient is cough medicine, Purple Drank is not as risky as other drugs. But a glass of Purple Drank can contain as much as 25 times the recommended dosage of prescription cough syrup—an amount that is very dangerous. Too much codeine can depress the central nervous system and stop the heart and lungs. As the deaths of DJ Screw, Pimp C, and many others prove, drinking large amounts of prescription cough syrup can be fatal. ☹

### REFERENCE

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2006-10-18-lean\\_x.htm?csp=34](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2006-10-18-lean_x.htm?csp=34)

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