Over-the-Counter (OTC)

Modes of Administration
Oral (pill, tablet, liquid)
Inhalation (snort crushed pill or tablet)

About OTC Drugs
The allure of over-the-counter (OTC) drugs is cheap cost, easy and wide availability, and legal status. Most adolescents and young adults do not even recognize the risks associated with abuse of OTC drugs, even though very clear consequences are denoted on the packaging of all OTC drugs.

In recent years, OTC drug abuse has dramatically increased, particularly with a drug called DXM, the cough suppressant substance in medicines such as Coricidin Cough and Cold®. DXM is a depressant and is used correctly to suppress cough; however, in large doses can result in hallucinations, blurred vision, confusion, drowsiness, and dizziness.

Sudafed®, or pseudoephedrine, is a decongestant and stimulant that is used correctly to treat sinus infections. However, in large doses, it causes restlessness, insomnia, hallucinations, and dizziness.

There is an exhaustive number of OTC drugs that carry the potential for abuse. It is important to recognize that a drug is a drug is a drug. When taken in doses other than those recommended, it can also lead to life-threatening situations, particularly when combined with other drugs. Simply because a drug is legal and available does not mean that it is safe for you to take.

A Word About OTC Drugs and Alcohol
Someone should always check for possible drug interactions when taking an over-the-counter drug, particularly with regard to consuming alcohol. As with many prescription drugs, alcohol may interrupt, counteract, or combine to create life-threatening consequences.