



Case Report

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Purple Drank: Syrup on the Streets

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Abstract

Purple Drank is a dangerous and potentially lethal concoction that has gained popularity in recent years. The drug is a mixture of prescription-strength cough syrup containing codeine, promethazine and soda. It is often combined with Jolly ranchers for added flavor. The name "Purple Drank" comes from the purple hue of the codeine-based cough syrup. This potent mixture also is known by several different street names. These include lean, sizzurp, syrup, Texas tea, and purple jelly (Figure 1). Codeine is an opiate, and promethazine is an antihistamine. When combined and consumed in excessive amounts, it can produce a euphoric and calming high, similar to the effects of other opioids. The cough syrup's sedative properties can lead to drowsiness and disorientation. The codeine provides pain relief and a feeling of relaxation [1].

The dangerous allure of Purple Drank lies in its potential deadly consequences. Misusing and abusing codeine-based cough syrup can lead to respiratory depression, impaired motor skills, and increased heart rate. In severe cases, an overdose can be fatal. The mixture is often ingested in large quantities, which dramatically increases the risk of adverse effects. The biochemical effects of Purple Drank are many. Codeine is an opioid analgesic that acts on the central nervous system. Once ingested, codeine is metabolized in the liver into morphine, which is responsible for its pain-relieving and euphoria-inducing effects. Morphine binds to opioid receptors in the brain, spinal cord, and other parts of the body, leading to a reduction in pain perception and inducing a sense of relaxation and euphoria. Promethazine, an antihistamine with sedative properties, acts by blocking the action of histamine, reducing allergic reactions and inflammation. In combination with codeine the effects are enhanced and can contribute to drowsiness, disorientation, increased sedation, euphoria, respiratory depression, and decreased pain perception [2].

Dentists should be knowledgeable about Purple Drank and its potential impact on oral health and overall well-being. Purple Drank can contain high levels of sugar, which increases the risk of tooth decay and gum disease. Codeine can cause dry mouth, which further contributes to dental problems. Chronic use of Purple Drank can lead to various health risks, including respiratory depression, cardiac issues, liver damage, and mental health problems [3].



Figure 1: Lean.

Case Study

A 22yr. old African American male presented to The UTHealth Houston School of Dentistry Urgent Care Dental Clinic with the following complaint. The student dentist noted that in transporting the patient from the waiting area to the clinic they had to slow the pace down and had to make frequent stops. The estimated distance from the waiting area to the clinic was less than 90 feet in total length. When the patient was seated the dental student noted that the patient had difficulties breathing and appeared to be in breathing distress. The patient's vital signs were inconsistent with a person for his age. He was 5'9, with a reported weight of 220 Lbs. He stated that he was not currently prescribed or taking any medications. His respiration was 26 breaths per minute and his blood pressure was 220/113 mmHg. He refused supplemental oxygen. When questioned concerning his social activity with non-prescribed medications he mentioned Lean, stating that he consumed the cocktail several times a day [4].

Purple Drank used in combination with other drugs can result in death. The new Purple Drank comes in many different colors depending on the ingredients added to the concoction. A recent article in The Houston Chronicle, July 2023 exposes to the public the many growing concerns of Purple Drank in the Houston Texas area.

References

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