

# Six RHS students reported to overdose on DXM

## Students treated for abuse of over-the-counter cough medicine

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Six Rawlins High School students were treated Tuesday after overdosing on dextromethorphan, the active ingredient found in many over-the-counter cough medicines.

Rawlins Police Chief Mike Reed said one student had taken 16 pills. "Some of them were having pretty concerning reactions to it," Reed said. He said his department was called to RHS before lunch and as of Tuesday afternoon, he said all six students received medical attention, but did not require hospitalization. "We're investigating what we're going to do next as to whether there will be criminal charges," he said. Dextromethorphan, commonly referred to as DXM, has a hallucinogenic effect if taken in a high enough quantity. "They get a high out of it and if they get enough they can hallucinate," said Dr. Archie Kirsch, Carbon County Health officer. Kirsch said Coricidin HPB, which is what the students took, has the highest concentration of DXM among cough medicines. Reed said those who abuse DXM try to find over-the-counter medicine that doesn't have other ingredients, which could cause the user to vomit and lessen the high. Kirsch said the biggest risk to a user is their mental state during use. "The medical risk would be the crazy stuff they might do when they're hallucinating," he said.

Reed advised parents to become educated on the use of DXM. At low levels of use, users appear inebriated, then mild hallucinations may occur and speech can become slurred. Short-term memory loss can occur and senses become impaired. After a high dosage, the experience is comparable to using powerful hallucinogenics like PCP or ketamine. "It's extremely dangerous at that point," he said. He said websites such as [WebMD.com](http://WebMD.com) and the Department of Justice — [www.justice.gov](http://www.justice.gov) — have information on DXM. There are no legal controls over the sale of medicine containing DXM, Reed said. He said the problem has been present in Rawlins, but not prevalent. "We've seen a little bit of it here at the police department, but not much," he said. "Today was probably the worst case we've seen of this type of behavior."