

DEA Says New Cold Medicine Can be Used to Make Meth



The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) said this week that a new cold medicine must be kept behind pharmacy counters because it can be used to make methamphetamine.

The medicine, Zephrex-D, contains a new form of pseudoephedrine that the drug's maker says is difficult to use to make meth.

Over the past month, pharmacies have started to sell Zephrex-D in all 50 states.

DEA spokesman Rusty Payne said government chemists were able to make meth from the cold medicine, the Associated Press reports. "DEA commends the efforts of companies to develop products that deter the production of illicit drugs," he said. "While this particular company claims that their 'drug delivery system provides a new and unconventional approach to combat drug misuse,' this product can still be utilized to manufacture methamphetamine."

In a news release, the company that makes Zephrex-D, Westport Pharmaceuticals, says the product cannot be used to make meth with the one-pot shake-and-bake method, in which the ingredients are mixed together in a soda bottle. "The vast majority of homemade meth is now produced this way," the company notes, adding that the Missouri Narcotics Officers Association said it has not found the product in any meth labs.

Pseudoephedrine must be crystallized in order to make meth. Westport officials say the pseudoephedrine in their product becomes goeey when heated, instead of crystallizing. The officials acknowledge that their product can be used to make meth in very small quantities, but that a single dose made in this way would cost \$250 to \$500—up to 20 times the street value.

According to the U.S. Combat Meth Act, pseudoephedrine products must be sold behind the counter. A person purchasing the products must show identification and have their names entered into a tracking database. More than 70 cities and counties in Missouri require prescriptions for pseudoephedrine, as do Oregon and Mississippi.