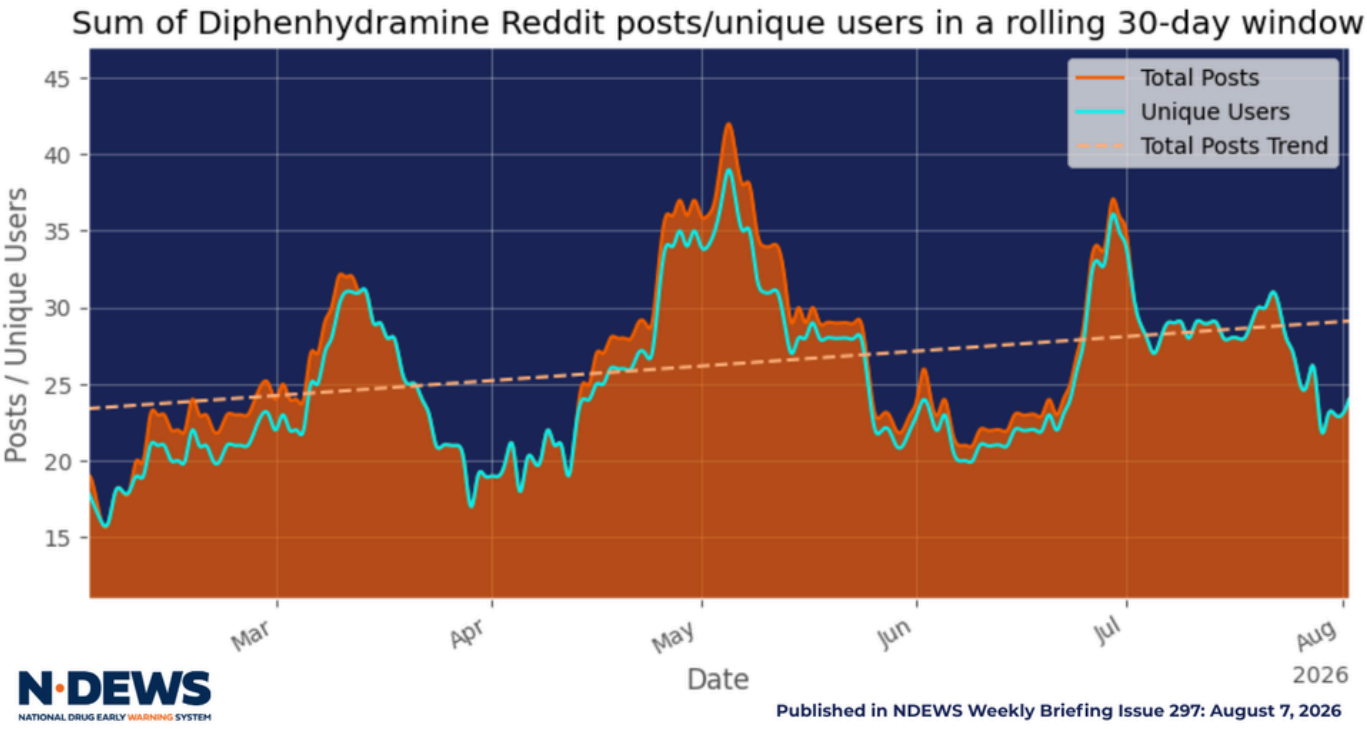
N·DEWS | NATIONAL DRUG EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Alert from the NDEWS Web Monitoring Team
Reddit mentions of diphenhydramine



Why are we reporting on this? Diphenhydramine, an over-the-counter first-generation antihistamine commonly sold under brand names like Benadryl, is being discussed on Reddit regarding nonmedical high-dose use, polysubstance combinations, and long-term health concerns. Online discussions reveal recurring themes including deliberate ingestion of large doses to induce delirium, the combination of diphenhydramine with opioids or dissociatives to enhance effects, and difficulties with chronic daily use and dependence.

What is diphenhydramine? Diphenhydramine is an over-the-counter H1-antihistamine and anticholinergic medication used to treat allergies, motion sickness, and temporary insomnia. While intended for short-term therapeutic use at low doses, high doses cross the blood-brain barrier and block muscarinic acetylcholine receptors, producing delirium, sedation, and severe physiological strain.

NDEWS is funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse to the University of Florida (MPI: Cottler (contact), Co-Is: Goldberger, Nixon, Striley), NYU Langone Health (MPI: Palamar), and Florida Atlantic University (Co-I: Barenholtz). (2026). Alert from the NDEWS Web Monitoring Team Reddit mentions of Benzimidazol-2-one/"Orphines" (July 10, 2026). Retrieved from ndews.org.

Public Health Impacts: Reddit discussants report substantial health concerns associated with nonmedical diphenhydramine use and chronic daily administration. Commenters frequently describe uncomfortable physiological and psychological effects, including severe physical heaviness, restless leg sensations, cognitive fog, persistent visual disturbances such as visual snow, and dysphoric hallucinations. Multiple discussions emphasize the risk of accidental overdose, severe motor impairment, and full-blown states of delirium leading to psychosis or physical injury. Additionally, commenters express concern regarding long-term daily use for sleep, citing fears of accelerated cognitive decline and severe rebound insomnia or withdrawal when attempting to quit.

How is it Being Discussed? Reddit commenters discuss diphenhydramine across a range of contexts, spanning routine sleep management to high-dose recreational deliriant "trips." A recurring theme is the deliberate combination of diphenhydramine with other substances, including dissociatives like dextromethorphan (DXM) and research chemicals, or opioid agonists like kratom and 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH), to potentiate visual effects or counteract unwanted side effects like nausea. While some discussants experiment with dosage, many posts warn against high-dose use, characterizing the experience as inherently dysphoric, uncomfortable, and alarming. Commenters actively share strategies to reduce negative effects associated with diphenhydramine, personal accounts of addiction, and strategies for quitting daily use, while discussing the widespread availability and low cost of over-the-counter preparations.

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