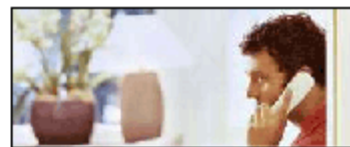


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## Support grows to restrict meth-making medicines

In the works: Soon, some products may be sold only from behind the pharmacy counter

By Sam Hananel  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON - The days of buying some cold remedies off the shelf in drug stores soon may be gone, a casualty of the methamphetamine epidemic.

Already, more than a dozen states have laws that require retailers to sell Sudafed, Nyquil and other medicines only from behind the pharmacy counter.

Now Congress is working on legislation intended to make it tougher for people to get the ingredients needed to manufacture the highly addictive drug.

Retailers once resisted the idea, saying it would inconvenience consumers. Today, stores seem ready to go along with a federal law in hope of avoiding a tangle of state regulations.

This month, a Senate committee plans hearings on a bill that sharply restricts the sale of cold and allergy pills containing pseudoephedrine. This ingredient is used to "cook" meth in makeshift labs across the country.

"There's a lot of public pressure to do something," said Sen. Jim Talent, R-Mo. He has joined with Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., on a bill to limit the sale of cold medicines.

"I think retailers - most of them - do not want to sell their products to meth cooks and they know they have to do something," Talent said.

The pharmaceutical industry has not raised major objections.

Pfizer Inc., which makes Sudafed, supports a national standard that would put pseudoephedrine behind the counter, said a company spokesman, Jay Kosminsky.

"I do think there really is an opportunity for a national consensus on this issue and I don't think there was a year ago," Kosminsky said.

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The meth problem is particularly severe in the Midwest, where rural areas provide cover for the pungent chemical odor from meth labs. In Missouri, law

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enforcement officers seized more than 2,700 meth labs last year - more than any other state.

The Senate bill is modeled on an Oklahoma law that took effect in April. The proposal would require the sale of medicines with pseudoephedrine only by a pharmacist or pharmacy personnel.

Customers would have to show a photo ID, sign a log and be limited to nine grams - or about 300 30-milligram pills - in a 30-day period.

Kmart, Walgreens, Target, Wal-Mart and other leading retailers have put in place guidelines to move cold products behind pharmacy counters or limit their sales.

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