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## What's Inside: NyQuil, Fortified With Powerful Narcotics!

By Patrick Di Justo 10.23.07 | 12:00 AM



**Photo: Thomas Hannich**

START

**Acetaminophen**

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**One of the many wonder-pharmaceuticals that can be derived from coal tar, acetaminophen was used for nearly a century as a painkiller and fever reducer before anyone figured out how it worked. We now know that as the drug breaks down in the body, it**

**turns into a cannabinoid: yes, stoners, the same type of compound that makes marijuana so irresistible. Doctors also once thought acetaminophen made users more talkative and outgoing. Current research suggests this idea was half-baked.**

### **Dextromethorphan HBr**

**A cough suppressant. Well, actually, in the body it becomes dextrorphan, a cough suppressant, and levorphanol, a painkiller five times as powerful as morphine. Like PCP and ketamine, DXM is also an NMDA receptor antagonist, so the National Institute on Drug Abuse lists it as a "dissociative" drug. Twelve times the recommended dose of NyQuil leads to distorted perceptions of sight and sound and produces feelings of detachment — dissociation — from the environment and oneself. For people whose bodies are unusually slow at metabolizing the drug, even low doses of DXM trigger full-blown "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds" psychedelic trips.**

### **Doxylamine succinate**

**Officially, this ingredient is on the label as an antihistamine. But it is equally useful as a sleep aid, providing a nice, convenient one-two... Zzzz.**

### **Citric acid**

**Citric acid has proven somewhat effective as a flu killer, but only if you spray it into your nose. Because NyQuil is meant to be swallowed, not snorted, its presence here is probably to add a little tang, and possibly to act as a low-level preservative.**

### **Alcohol**

**Hooch has been used as a folk remedy for the common cold for centuries (despite the fact that it doesn't work). But according to Procter & Gamble, alcohol's sole purpose in NyQuil is to serve as a solvent, keeping the top three ingredients in solution.**

### **Polyethylene glycol and propylene glycol**

**Chemical cousins used as thickeners. NyQuil's consistency is somewhere between water and honey, but not because it needs to be. Drug marketers know many people prefer medicines in syrup form.**

### **Sodium citrate**

**In other contexts sodium citrate is an anticoagulant; most likely it is used here as a buffer to maintain the acid-base balance of all the other ingredients.**

### **Flavor**

**P&G isn't talking, but we suspect the cloyingly repulsive taste of NyQuil is to ensure that you can swallow a tablespoon or two but can't drink enough of the stuff to start seeing Jesus.**

**High fructose corn syrup**

**A dash of sugar helps that tablespoon or two go down.**