

Target Pulling Meds Used For Meth

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Discount retailer Target Corp. will no longer allow unfettered access to cold medicines that are used to make the illegal stimulant methamphetamine.

Target stores nationwide will pull many cold, allergy and cough remedies from their regular shelves and sell them only from pharmacy counters, the Minneapolis-based company announced Monday.

The restrictions apply to all over-the-counter drugs containing pseudoephedrine, including children's medicines, tablets, liquids and gel-caps, spokeswoman Carolyn Brookter said. Pseudoephedrine is a key ingredient for meth, which can be made in makeshift labs.

The products won't be sold at all by about 300 Target stores that don't have pharmacies. Target operates 1,330 stores in 47 states and is the nation's second largest discount retailer after Wal-Mart.

Brookter said the shift, which will take effect in two to three months, was in response to a growing number of state and local restrictions on the sale of the medications.

"We know that this is going to be a change in behavior for our guests," Brookter said. "The products won't be on the shelves. It'll be a little different."

Target says it's the first national retailer to take the step. The National Association of Chain Drug Stores couldn't immediately confirm whether Target's announcement was the first of its kind for a national retailer. A Wal-Mart spokeswoman didn't immediately return phone messages.

Target's move won praise from Minnesota lawmakers pushing for tougher measures to fight meth, which can be made using a variety of household chemicals and pseudoephedrine.

"For them to take this lead I would assume that Wal-Marts and all the rest of them will have to follow them very shortly," said state Sen. Julie Rosen, a Republican who has been pushing strict restrictions on the sale of meth ingredients. "There is a certain amount of community responsibility these retailers should assume."

Target already had limited purchases of pseudoephedrine-containing drugs to two packages at a time, Brookter said.

A number of states are following the example of Oklahoma, where restrictions on sales of some cold medicines were followed by a dramatic drop in the number of meth lab seizures.

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