

ER visits linked to ADHD meds up sharply

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Government report shows more cases among adults, more misuse of these drugs.

(HealthDay)—U.S. emergency department visits involving attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) drugs more than doubled from 2005 to 2010, with the largest hike occurring among adults, says a new government report.

In that period, such ER visits rose from about 13,400 to 31,200, according to the U.S. Substance Abuse and [Mental Health Services](#) Administration (SAMHSA).

"[ADHD](#) medications, when properly prescribed and used, can be of enormous benefit to those suffering from ADHD, but like any other medication they can pose serious risks—particularly when they are misused," SAMHSA administrator Pamela Hyde said in an agency news release.

In adults, cases rose from about 2,100 to 8,100 among those aged 18 to 25, from about 1,750 to 6,100 among those aged 26 to 34 and from roughly 2,500 to nearly 8,000 among those over 35, during the time period.

Rates among children and teens remained largely unchanged from 2005 to 2010, according to the findings published Jan. 24 in SAMHSA's *DAWN Report*.

The investigators also found that the number of ER visits involving the nonmedical use of ADHD medications nearly tripled during this time, from

about 5,200 to nearly 15,600. In 2010, nonmedical use of ADHD drugs made up half of all ER visits involving ADHD medications.

The gap between [males and females](#) in the number of ER visits related to nonmedical use of the drugs narrowed during the study period. In 2005, the numbers were about 3,800 for males and about 1,400 for females. In 2011, numbers reached 8,650 for males and about 6,900 for females.

According to Hyde, "this study indicates that a better job has to be done alerting all segments of society—not just the young—that misuse of these medications is extremely dangerous."

There were 2.3 million U.S. [emergency department](#) visits related to the misuse of all drugs in 2010, according to background information in the news release.

More information: The [U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse](#) has more about abuse of prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

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