

# Prescription opioid and benzodiazepine misuse linked with suicidal thoughts

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Misuse of prescription opioids or benzodiazepines (such as Xanax) was associated with suicidal ideation in a study of US older adults.

In the *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* study of 17,608 [adults](#) aged 50 years and older, past-year use (without misuse) of

prescription opioids or benzodiazepines was not associated with past-year suicidal ideation.

In contrast, past-year [opioid](#) misuse was associated with an 84 percent increased odds of past-year suicidal ideation, and past-year benzodiazepine misuse was associated with a twofold increased odds, after controlling for various factors related to suicide in other work.

While 2.2 percent of US older adults not engaged in either opioid or benzodiazepine misuse reported past-year suicidal ideation, the rate was 25.4 percent in those who misused both medication classes.

"Suicide is a major public health concern in older adults. Our study found a strong link between prescription opioid or benzodiazepine misuse and [suicidal ideation](#), which is particularly concerning because these medications are commonly prescribed to older adults," said lead author Dr. Ty Schepis, of Texas State University. "Prescribers and other health professionals are encouraged to screen for prescription opioid or benzodiazepine misuse in [older adults](#) who are prescribed these medications to prevent suicide."

**More information:** Ty S. Schepis et al, Prescription opioid and benzodiazepine misuse is associated with suicidal ideation in older adults, *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* (2018). [DOI: 10.1002/gps.4999](#)

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