Abuse of Prescription (Rx) Drugs Affects Young Adults Most

Young adults (age 18 to 25) are the biggest abusers of prescription (Rx) opioid pain relievers, ADHD stimulants, and anti-anxiety drugs. They do it for all kinds of reasons, including to get high, or because they think Rx stimulants will help them study better. But Rx abuse is dangerous: In 2010, almost 3,000 young adults died from prescription drug (mainly opioid) overdoses—more than died from overdoses of any other drug, including heroin and cocaine combined—and many more needed emergency treatment.

**PAST YEAR USE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age 12 to 17</th>
<th>Age 18 to 25</th>
<th>26+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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</table>

The nonmedical use of prescription drugs is highest among young adults.¹

**CONSEQUENCES**

3,000 young adults died from Rx drug overdose in 2010—a 250% increase from 1999⁵...

...that’s 8 persons per day

Among young adults, for every death due to Rx drug overdose, there were

**MOTIVATIONS FOR USE**

Most young adults say they use Rx drugs to²,³,⁴

- lose weight
- feel better
- sleep
- deal with problems
- study
- concentrate
- have a good time with friends
- increase alertness
- get high
- relax
- decrease anxiety
- counter effects of other drugs
- experiment

**TREATMENT ADMISSIONS**

17

**EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS**

66

¹ SAMHSA, NSDUH; ² Rabiner et al 2009; ³ McCabe et al 2007; ⁴ Lord et al 2011; ⁵ CDC Wonder; ⁶ SAMHSA, TEDS; ⁷ SAHMSA, DAWN