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Prescription Painkiller Abuse Jumped 75 Percent From 2002 to 2010

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A new study finds prescription painkiller abuse jumped 75 percent between 2002 and 2010.

Men and adults ages 26 to 49 were most likely to abuse prescription painkillers.

Bloomberg News reports the study is the first to examine who is likely to abuse prescription painkillers, and how often it occurs. The study found more than 15,000 people overdosed on painkillers and died in 2009—more than double the number in 2002.

"Chronic nonmedical use is increasing and these drugs have very dangerous risks," study author Christopher Jones of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Injury Center told Bloomberg News. "As sales of these drugs have gone up so has the unintended adverse events." These events include overdoses, deaths, emergency room visits and addiction, he said.

The study, published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, is based on data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, which provides national estimates on substance abuse.

The researchers found 3.8 per 1,000 people said they used prescription painkillers for nonmedical purposes for 200 days or more in 2009-2010, compared with 2.2 per 1,000 in 2002-2003. That represents a 75 percent increase. The study took population growth into account, the authors noted.

Men who used prescription painkillers for nonmedical purposes for 200 or more days annually rose 105 percent from 2002 to 2010.

Among adults ages 26 to 34, the rate jumped 81 percent, the article notes. Among teens 12 to 17, nonmedical use of painkillers dropped 26 percent during those years. Overall, almost one million people reported using pain relievers nonmedically for 200 days or more in 2009-2010, while 4.6 million people used them for 30 days or more. The researchers conclude that "these findings

underscore the need for concerted public health and public safety action to prevent nonmedical use of these drugs."

To learn more about Prescription Drugs, click here.