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NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

ER Visits Related to Stimulants Quadrupled Among Young Adults From 2005 to 2011

Emergency rooms reported a 300 percent jump in visits related to stimulant abuse among young adults from 2005 to 2011.

According to *The New York Times*, 23,000 people ages 18 to 34 visited the ER in 2011 after taking drugs such as Adderall or Ritalin.

The ER visits resulted from abuse or misuse of stimulants, including taking the drugs with alcohol, or taking larger-than-prescribed doses of pills.

About one-third of the ER visits involved alcohol.

Stimulants such as caffeine pills and caffeinated energy drinks were also included in the report. Illegal stimulants such as methamphetamine were not included. Caffeinated energy drinks were not a significant factor in the rise in stimulant-related ER visits.

The findings come from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which found a particularly steep rise in ER visits for stimulant use among young adults ages 18 to 25.

"Nonmedical use of any drug, even an over-the-counter drug, can be dangerous, but these [central nervous system] stimulants can potentially cause significant and lasting harm, including heart problems and addiction," SAMHSA Chief Medical Officer Elinore F. McCance-Katz, MD, PhD, said in a news release. "We must raise awareness of this public health risk and do everything possible to prevent it."

According to SAMHSA, when these drugs are combined with alcohol, they can change a person's perception of how intoxicated they are, and can increase the risk of alcohol poisoning or alcohol-related injuries.

Prescription drugs are the third most commonly abused category of drugs, behind alcohol and

marijuana and ahead of cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine. Some prescription drugs can become addictive, especially when used in a manner inconsistent with their labeling by someone other than the patient for whom they were prescribed, or when taken in a manner or dosage other than prescribed. Overall, an estimated 48 million people have abused prescription drugs, representing nearly 20% of the U.S. population. Click here to read more.