

The DAWN Report

Data Spotlight

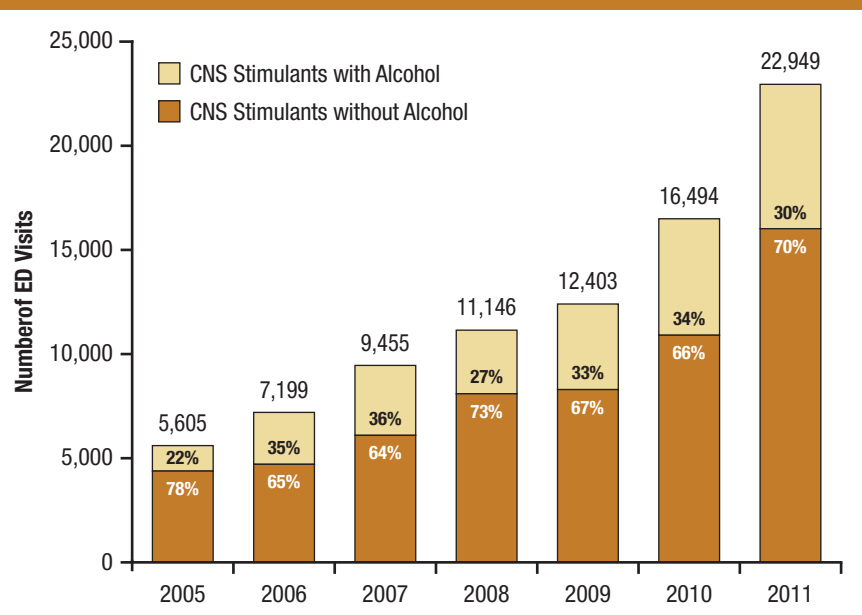
August 8, 2013



Emergency Department Visits Involving Nonmedical Use of Central Nervous System Stimulants among Adults Aged 18 to 34 Increased between 2005 and 2011

Central nervous system (CNS) stimulants include prescription drugs, like those used to treat attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or to block sleepiness.¹ They also include over-the-counter products that contain caffeine. Nonmedical use of these drugs has been linked to heart and blood vessel problems, as well as to drug abuse or dependence.² When combined with alcohol, CNS stimulants can hide the effects of being drunk and increase the risk of alcohol poisoning or alcohol-related injuries.³ According to data from the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN), the number of emergency department (ED) visits related to nonmedical use of CNS stimulants among adults aged 18 to 34 increased from 5,605 in 2005 to 22,949 in 2011. The number of ED visits involving CNS stimulants and alcohol also increased.⁴ Each year, about 30 percent of ED visits involving nonmedical CNS stimulant use also involved alcohol. To learn more about nonmedical use of prescription drugs, including ways to prevent misuse, please visit <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/prescription-drugs>.

Central Nervous System (CNS) Stimulant-Related Emergency Department (ED) Visits Involving Nonmedical Use of Pharmaceuticals* among Adults Aged 18 to 34, by Alcohol Involvement: 2005 to 2011



* Nonmedical use of pharmaceuticals includes taking more than the prescribed dose of a prescription pharmaceutical or more than the recommended dose of an over-the-counter pharmaceutical or supplement; taking a pharmaceutical prescribed for another individual; deliberate poisoning with a pharmaceutical by another person; and documented misuse or abuse of a prescription drug, an over-the-counter pharmaceutical, or a dietary supplement. Nonmedical use of pharmaceuticals may involve pharmaceuticals alone or pharmaceuticals in combination with illicit drugs or alcohol.

1. CNS stimulants include but are not limited to ADHD medications (e.g., Adderall®, Ritalin®, Strattera®, Vyvanse®), other prescription medications (e.g., benzphetamine, modafinil), and caffeine pills and caffeine-containing energy drinks. Illicit stimulants (e.g., methamphetamine) are not included.
2. Lakhan, S. E., & Kirchgessner, A. (2012). Prescription stimulants in individuals with and without attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: Misuse, cognitive impact, and adverse effects. *Brain and Behavior*, 2(5), 661-677. doi:10.1002/brb3.78
3. Egan, K. L., Reboussin, B. A., Blocker, J. N., Wolfson, M., & Sutfin, E. L. (2012, December 28). Simultaneous use of non-medical ADHD prescription stimulants and alcohol among undergraduate students. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1016/j.drugalcohol.2012.12.004
4. Caffeine-containing energy drinks had a minor effect on the increase in ED visits related to nonmedical use of CNS stimulants because most visits related to energy drinks involve adverse reactions, not nonmedical use. For example, in 2011, 70 percent of energy-drink related visits involved adverse reactions. Please see <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/2k13/DAWN126/sr126-energy-drinks-use.pdf>.

Source: The Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) is a public health surveillance system that monitors drug-related hospital emergency department (ED) visits and drug-related deaths to track the impact of drug use, misuse, and abuse in the United States.

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