

Chronic Abuse of Painkillers on the Rise

 *By MyHealthNewsDaily Staff | LiveScience.com – Mon, Jun 25, 2012*

The percentage of people who abuse [prescription pain drugs](#) on a regular basis is on the rise, a new study says.

Between 2002 and 2010, the rate of "chronic" [prescription drug abuse](#) — which means taking [prescription drugs](#) for a nonmedical reason on at least 200 days in the last year — increased by 76 percent, the study found.

The increase parallels the recent rise in deaths due to overdoses of [opioid pain relievers](#), such as oxycodone and hydrocodone, according to the report. In 2009, more than 15,000 people died from overdoses involving these drugs, more than double the number of such deaths in 2002.

"These findings underscore the need for concerted public health and public safety action to prevent nonmedical use of these drugs," researcher [Christopher Jones](#), of the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), wrote in the June 25 issue of the journal *Archives of Internal Medicine*.

Previous studies have suggested that the [percentage](#) of people who say they've abused prescription pain drugs in the last year has remained stable since 2002. But these studies have not specifically looked at changes in the rates of [chronic abuse](#).

Jones analyzed information from a national survey of Americans ages 12 years or older, conducted in 2002 to 2003 and again in 2009 to 2010.

Participants were asked if they had used [prescription pain relievers](#) in the past year for a nonmedical reason (without a prescription, or for the feeling/experience the drug causes.) If they answered yes, they were asked how many days they used [prescription pain relievers](#) nonmedically in the last year.

In the 2002 to 2003 period, about 2 out of every 1,000 people said they used [prescription pain reliever](#) for a nonmedical reason on at least 200 days in the last year. In the 2009 to 2010 period, that rate increased to 4 out of every 1,000 people, equivalent to almost a million more people in the United States, Jones wrote. There was a larger increase among men reporting this type of abuse, compared with women.

However, the overall rate of prescription pain reliever abuse (the percentage of people who said they took prescription pain relievers for a nonmedical reason for any amount of time in the past year) did not change significantly between 2002 and 2010, the researchers said.

Pass it on: Along with the rise in overdose deaths from prescription pain medication, there has been a rise in the percentage of people who regularly abuse the drugs.

Follow MyHealthNewsDaily on Twitter [@MyHealth_MHND](#). We're also on [Facebook](#) & [Google+](#).

- [The Old Drug Talk: 7 New Tips for Today's Parents](#)
- [Hypersex to Hoarding: 7 New Psychological Disorders](#)
- [Prescription Drug Problem Sparks Debate Over Solutions](#)

Copyright 2012 [MyHealthNewsDaily](#), a TechMediaNetwork company. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.