



Study: Teen opioid use linked to parental use

by Melissa Jenco, News Content Editor

Teens are more likely to abuse prescription opioids if their parents do so, according to a new study.

The connection is similar to those seen in parent-child use of cigarettes, marijuana and alcohol, researchers said.

They used data from the 2004-'12 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health on 35,000 pairs of parents and adolescents ages 12-17 years.

Parents and adolescents were asked if they ever took prescription opioids that were not prescribed to them or if they took prescription opioids to get high. They also answered questions about their relationship, other substance use, demographics and psychosocial characteristics.

Results showed 14% of adolescents misused prescription opioids if their parents did compared to 8% if their parents did not. The findings held true after controlling for other factors, according to the study "Nonmedical Prescription Opioid Use by Parents and Adolescents in the US" (Griesler PC, et al. *Pediatrics*. Feb. 25, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-2354>).

Further analysis found mothers' opioid use predicted teen use. Race and gender were not significant factors in parent-child use

In addition, teens were more likely to misuse prescription opioids if their parents smoked, did not monitor them closely or had a troubled relationship with them, the study showed. Teens' own smoking, marijuana use, depression and delinquency also made them more likely to misuse prescription opioids. Those who were religious or believed the drugs to be risky were less likely to use them.

Authors said there are several possible explanations for the link between parent and teen opioid use. Teens may have been copying their parents' behavior, drugs may have been more readily available in their homes or parenting strategies may be ineffective. Genetics also may play a role.

"Parent-based interventions targeted at NMPO (nonmedical prescription opioid use) use among youth should not only address parental NMPO use but should also promote positive parenting practices, such as monitoring and reduced conflict," they wrote.

Resources

- [AAP policy "Substance Use Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment"](#)
- [CDC resources on prescription opioids](#)
- [Information for parents from HealthyChildren.org on opioids](#)
- [HealthyChildren.org video on medication safety](#)
- [Pediatrics journal collection on opioid addiction](#)
- [Pediatrics in Review article "Common Substances of Abuse"](#)