

Teens' painkiller misuse linked to dating violence

November 20 2017, by Steven Reinberg, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—Teens who abuse prescription drugs, like opioid

painkillers, are prone to initiating or being victims of dating violence, a new study finds.

In a nationwide survey of more than 10,000 teenagers who had dated in the past year, the researchers found that non-medical use of [prescription drugs](#) by boys was associated with sexual dating violence.

And non-medical use of prescription drugs by girls was linked more often with physical dating violence, according to the study's lead researcher, Heather Clayton. She is a health scientist at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The findings showed that nearly 10 percent of [high school students](#) surveyed said they had experienced physical dating violence, and slightly more than 10 percent said they were victims of sexual dating violence.

"According to the 2015 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, nearly 17 percent of U.S. high school students indicated that they had used prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription at some point in their lifetime," Clayton said.

In addition, an estimated 6 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds misused prescription drugs—such as pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants and sedatives—in the past year.

"We know that youth who experience dating violence are more likely to have symptoms of depression and anxiety, engage in unhealthy behaviors, such as using tobacco, drugs and drinking alcohol, be involved in antisocial behavior and thinking about suicide," Clayton said.

"The associations are likely complex and reflective of the many challenges faced by already at-risk populations," she added.

One pediatrics expert believes that there's a vicious-cycle nature to the misuse of prescription drugs and dating violence, with each feeding on the other.

"It is likely that prescription [drug](#) abuse increases likelihood for violence victimization, and such victimization increases the chances that a young person engages in prescription drug abuse," said Dr. Elizabeth Miller. She directs the division of adolescent and young adult medicine at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh.

"It is important to pay attention to how [sexual violence](#) may be related to other health problems, like prescription drug abuse," said Miller, who wrote an editorial that accompanied the study.

It's also possible that both [prescription drug abuse](#) and dating violence have similar root causes, like mental health problems that occur before the teenage years, she suggested.

"Doctors and nurses caring for youth should be aware that young people who are abusing drugs are also more likely to be in unhealthy and abusive relationships, which in turn can make the drug use worse," Miller added.

For the study, CDC researchers analyzed data on more than 5,100 boys and 5,300 girls, in grades 9 to 12, who had participated in dating in the year before the survey.

The teens were asked how many times in the past year they had taken a prescription drug— such as OxyContin, Percocet, Vicodin, codeine, Adderall, Ritalin or Xanax —without a doctor's prescription.

The students also were asked whether they had been physically assaulted by their date. That included such things as being hit, slammed into

something or injured with an object or weapon.

The teens were asked about sexual violence as well—specifically, how many times in the last year someone they were dating did sexual things that they did not want to do, such as kissing, touching or being physically forced to have sexual intercourse.

According to Clayton, "This study can be used to inform and enhance community and school efforts to prevent adolescent dating violence victimization and substance use. Clinicians may also consider the association between these behavioral health concerns when screening their adolescent patients for experiences of dating [violence](#) or substance use."

The report was published online Nov. 20 in the journal *Pediatrics*.

More information: Heather Clayton, Ph.D., M.P.H., health scientist, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Elizabeth Miller, M.D., Ph.D., director, division of adolescent and young adult medicine, Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, and professor, pediatrics, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine; Nov. 20, 2017, *Pediatrics*, online

The National Center for Victims of Crime has more on [dating violence](#).

Copyright © 2017 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

Citation: Teens' painkiller misuse linked to dating violence (2017, November 20) retrieved 18 January 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-11-teens-painkiller-misuse-linked-dating.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--