



Drug Overdoses in Youth

EXPAND ALL

Revised February 2017

How do drug overdoses happen?

When a person dies due to a drug overdose the medical examiner or coroner records on the death certificate if the overdose was intentional – purposely self-inflicted (as in cases of suicide) – or unintentional (accidental).

Unintentional drug poisoning deaths can happen when a drug or drugs are taken on purpose (or mixed together). They can also happen when a drug or drugs are accidentally taken or given to a person in the course of a medical procedure. Total overdose death numbers also include cases where drugs are given to a person in a criminal act (a homicide, if a death occurs.) With most drugs, there are more accidental deaths than suicides or homicides.

Some overdoses happen when people leave drug treatment. During treatment, a person goes through a detoxification (“detox”) process---getting the drug out of the body. If a person has gone through detox, and then takes the same amount of drugs they took before, they can overdose because the body is no longer used to the same dose.

This Is NIDA: Opioids

How many young people die from drug overdoses?

Drug Overdoses, Ages 15-24	Number of Deaths, 2015
Total Overdose Deaths	4,235
Female	1,258
Male	2,977
Alcohol	110
Cocaine	442
Heroin and other illicit opioids ¹	2,343
Marijuana	There are no reports of teens or young adults dying from an overdose of marijuana alone. But there are many reports of marijuana users seeking treatment in emergency rooms, reporting uncomfortable side effects from consuming high THC levels in smoked marijuana or marijuana edibles.

Drug Overdoses, Ages 15-24

Number of Deaths, 2015

Prescription Drugs:

<u>Benzodiazepines (e.g. sedatives)</u>	665
<u>Common Prescription Opioids (pain relievers)</u> ²	886

[Synthetic Cannabinoids \(K2/Spice\)](#)

Deaths have been reported. However, while some state and local governments (and other groups) collect this information, total nationwide numbers are not currently available.

See the [full set of overdose death statistics](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death 1999-2015 on CDC WONDER Online Database, T40.1, T40.4, released 2016. Available at <http://wonder.cdc.gov>.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death 1999-2015 on CDC WONDER Online Database, T40.2, T40.3, released 2016. Available at <http://wonder.cdc.gov>.

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