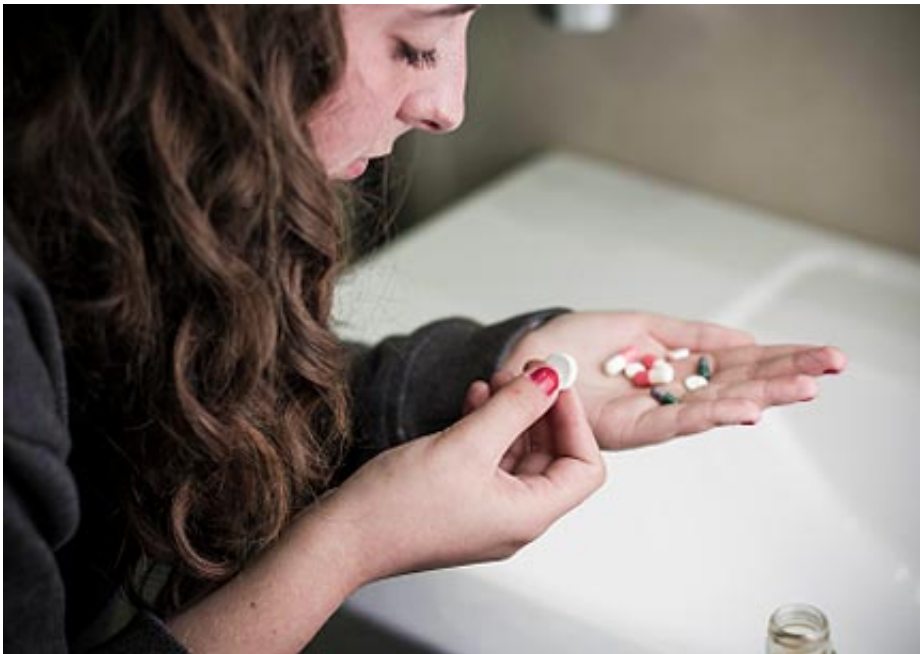


# Most teens have easy access to their prescription drugs, study finds

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Three in four teens who were prescribed medication during the last six months had unsupervised access to them at home, likely increasing the risk of overdose, substance abuse and drug diversion, a new University of Michigan study indicates.

The study sought to determine teens' access to their own medications, specifically pain, [stimulant](#), anti-anxiety and sedative drugs that are

federally controlled. Among those who said the storage of their [prescribed medications](#) was supervised, more than half described accessible locations, such as a cabinet or drawer in the kitchen or bathroom, or on a countertop.

Researchers said the findings were alarming given that the [respondents](#) were in the 8th and 9th grades with a mean age of 14.1 years.

"The lack of parental supervision and proper storage of medicines prescribed to [adolescents](#) may facilitate (their) nonmedical use of these medications, putting them at risk for poisoning or overdose," said the study's lead author Paula Ross-Durow, a research investigator at the U-M Institute for Research on Women and Gender.

Without proper storage or supervision, teens might be more likely to give or sell them to others, the researchers said.

The five-year longitudinal study involved adolescents—who had their parents' consent—completing interviews. More than 500 participants responded to questions such as what medications were prescribed by a [medical](#) or dental professional, where in the home the drugs were stored, and whether access to these medications had been supervised.

The researchers said some parents and guardians may not believe that their children would engage in nonmedical use and, therefore, do not take steps to secure [prescription medications](#).

"It is critical that clinicians educate parents and patients about the importance of proper storage and disposal of medications, particularly those with abuse potential," Ross-Durow said.

In addition to Ross-Durow, the study's authors are Sean Esteban McCabe, research associate professor at the Institute for Research on

Women and Gender, and Carol Boyd, the Deborah J. Oakley Collegiate Professor of Nursing and co-director of the Sport, Health and Activity Research and Policy Center for Women and Girls.

The findings appear in the August issue of the *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

Provided by University of Michigan

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