

U.S. kids use ADHD meds more during school year

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Researchers suggest this may be to boost academic achievement.

(HealthDay)—American children's use of stimulant medications is 30 percent higher during the school year than in the summer, a new study indicates.

The findings suggest that many children may use stimulants to help them meet academic demands, according to the researchers.

Stimulant medications improve concentration and help manage symptoms associated with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). They are the most widely used type of medication among teens, the researchers said. Currently, about 6 percent of U.S. children use stimulants, up from about 2.4 percent in 1996, the study authors noted.

The current study included an analysis of prescriptions written for

stimulants in the United States during the 2007 to 2008 school year. The study revealed that use of the drugs during school months is highest among children in wealthier families. Stimulant use during school months is also greater in states that have higher academic standards for students, the researchers found.

Although this study found a higher use of stimulant medications during the school year, it wasn't designed to tease out the exact reasons why this occurred. However, the researchers suspect that parents—either intentionally or unwittingly—may be giving their [children stimulant medication](#) during the school year to give them an educational advantage.

"Many parents are faced with a tough decision: Do they medicate their kids to help them manage in an increasingly demanding school environment?" study lead author Marissa King, assistant professor of organizational behavior at the Yale University School of Management, said in a university news release.

"Rather than trying to make kids conform to the school system by taking [stimulants](#), we need to take a closer look at what is happening in schools," King suggested.

The study was published online Oct. 13 in the journal *American Sociological Review*.

More information: The U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse has more about [stimulant ADHD medications](#).

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