

Opioid misuse, binge drinking often go hand in hand

June 11 2019



(HealthDay)—Of the more than 4 million Americans who misuse

prescription opioids, more than half also binge drink, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Put another way, people who binge drink are two times more likely to misuse opioids than non-drinkers, the agency reveals in a new study.

"We are losing far too many Americans each day from overdoses," CDC director Dr. Robert Redfield said in an agency news release. "Combining alcohol and opioids can significantly increase the risk of overdoses and deaths."

For women, binge drinking is having four or more drinks on a single occasion. The threshold for men is five or more drinks. Prescription [opioid](#) misuse is defined as taking powerful painkillers like morphine or OxyContin (oxycodone) without a prescription or to get high.

Dr. Robert Glatter, an emergency medicine physician at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City, explained that "the simultaneous use of alcohol and [prescription opioids](#) is dangerous because both types of substances act as central nervous system depressants." This interaction significantly increases the risk of respiratory depression and death, he said.

Glatter called the new study a "major wake-up call."

"We need to educate those who drink excessively about the added dangers of misusing opioids, which can be a recipe for respiratory depression and death," he said.

For the report, the CDC analyzed 2012-2014 data from the U.S. National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

Those who combined prescription opioid use and binge [drinking](#) were

likely to be 26 or older. They also tended to be less educated and have lower incomes. Furthermore, prescription opioid misuse rose as [binge drinking](#) increased, the researchers found.

What's needed? According to the CDC, a comprehensive effort to tackle [excessive drinking](#) and prescription opioid misuse could help to reduce the risk of drug overdoses.

Communities can limit the number of places where people can buy alcohol, restrict the hours when it can be sold and take [legal action](#) against places that sell alcohol to minors, the agency advises. Better strategies to prevent and treat opioid disorders would help, too, the agency suggested.

The study was published June 11 in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

More information: For more on substance abuse, visit the [U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#).

Copyright © 2019 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

Citation: Opioid misuse, binge drinking often go hand in hand (2019, June 11) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-06-opioid-misuse-binge.html>

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.
