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## Prescription drug deaths skyrocket 68 percent over five years as Americans swallow more pills

Thursday, February 22, 2007 by: M.T. Whitney  
[Printable version](#) Key concepts: [prescription drug](#), [prescription drug deaths](#) and [suicide](#).

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(NewsTarget) Poisoning from prescription drugs has risen to become the second-largest cause of unintentional deaths in the United States, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In its Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, researchers found that deaths from prescription drugs rose from 4.4 per 100,000 people in 1999 to 7.1 per 100,000 in 2004.

This increase represents a jump from 11,000 people to almost 20,000 in the span of five years.

Among the 20,000 that died, more than 8,500 – double the number from 1999 -- were from "other and unspecified drugs."

Psychotherapeutic drugs, like antidepressants and sedatives, nearly doubled from 671 deaths to 1,300.

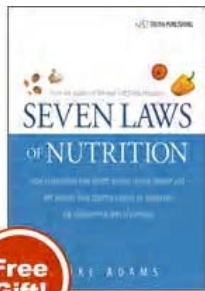
Age-wise, the biggest jump was among people aged 15 to 24, which the CDC report says relates to recreational [prescription drug](#) use and a jump in cocaine use.

However, all other age groups except the elderly over-75 group saw increases of more than 35 percent on a per 100,000 scale in prescription drug deaths – including a nearly 90 percent jump for the late Baby Boomer generation (ages 45 to 54) and a more than 90 percent for people aged 55 to 64. Mike Adams, a consumer health advocate and outspoken critic of pharmaceutical companies, said that the [drug industry](#) is freely killing Americans.

"The entire drug industry, including the monopolistic drug giants and their FDA co-conspirator, has clearly become the single greatest threat to the health and safety of the [American people](#)," Adams said. "And yet [the FDA](#) continues to push more drugs onto more Americans than ever before, all while pretending these drugs are safe and effective when, in reality, they are neither. Today's pharmaceutical industry is a massive fraud being perpetrated against the American people, propped up by illegal trade practices, monopolistic behavior and outright criminal behavior on the part of the FDA."

One caveat of the report is that the data used did not allow [suicides](#) to be separated from other drug deaths, meaning there may be inherent errors because it was impossible to tell after death the intent or reason for a person's death from [prescription drugs](#).

"Some of these deaths might have been suicides, although not classified as such, and some deaths categorized as



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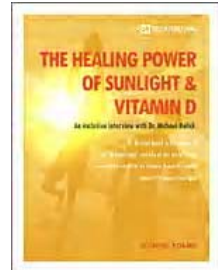
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suicides or of undetermined intent might have been unintentional and therefore not analyzed in this study. The extent of this error is not known," the report states.

However, statistics from the web site [suicide.org](#) state that in 2001, nearly 5,200 deaths came from self-poisoning, which includes not only abusing prescription drugs but also overdosing on over-the-counter drugs and ingesting lethal chemicals.

The CDC report can be read in full [at this link](#).

###

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