

Production of this document has been made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.

Special points of interest:

- The use of over-the-counter (OTC) drugs for unintended purposes is <10%
- Boys were more likely to use cough syrup for unintended purposes than girls
- Very few students are using prescription drugs without going to the doctor

Fact Sheet #9 Prescription and 'Over-the-Counter' Drugs

Prescription and 'Over-the-Counter' Drugs

Non-medical use of prescription and over the counter drugs among youth is a growing concern. Some of the more common drugs used this way are drugs prescribed for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder such as Ritalin; opiate based pain relievers such as Oxycontin and sedatives such as Valium. Youth also report using over the counter drugs such as laxatives, gravol,

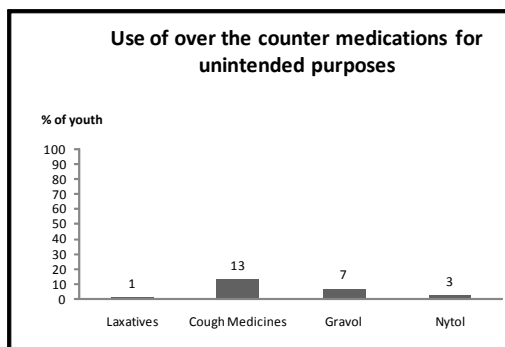
cough medicine and nytol for purposes other than which they are intended.

Fewer than one percent of youth reported they used prescription drugs for unintended purposes. These numbers are lower than reported in other studies. Around 10% reported using over the counter drugs for unintended purposes.

About 10% of rural youth report use of 'over the counter' medication for unintended purposes.

Use of over the counter medications for unintended purposes among students was relatively low. Fewer than 10% of students used laxatives, Gravol or Nytol for unintended purposes. There was no strong differences between different age groups or between males and females.

Over 13% of students reported using cough syrup for unintended purposes. While

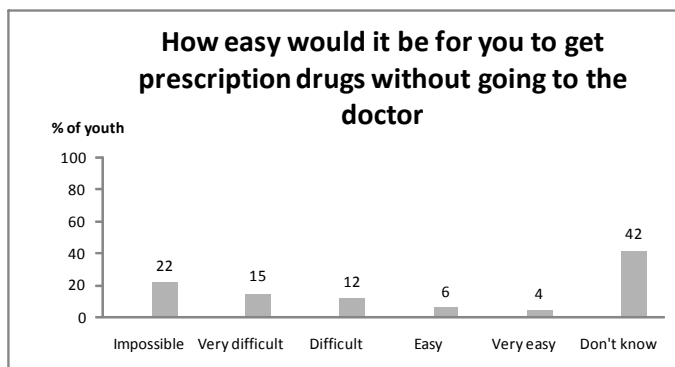


there was no difference between different ages, boys were more likely to have used cough syrup than girls.

About 10% thought it would be easy to get prescription drugs without a prescription

Only 9.9% of all students in the survey said it would be easy or very easy to get prescription drugs without going to the doctor. Most students thought it would be impossible or didn't know how hard it would be to get prescription drugs without going to the doctor.

Younger students were more likely to say that it was impossible to get drugs without going to the doctor. In addition, there was no difference between boys and girls.



"We couldn't get it from our pharmacist cause he knows us all." - Youth Focus Group Participant

Contact Information

Dr. Diane Martz
Room 304, Kirk Hall
117 Science Place
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, SK,

Phone: 306-966-8585
Fax: 306-966-2069
E-mail: diane.martz@usask.ca

Saskatchewan Rural Youth Healthy Lifestyles and Risk Behaviour Study

Researcher: Dr. Diane Martz, University of Saskatchewan (U of S)

Research Assistants: Angela Wagner (PWHCE), Noreen Strueby (PWHCE), Jinfang Chen (PWHCE), Shanna Gourley (SPC), Sarah Freistadt (U of S), Andrew Baker (SPC), Ingrid Brueckner (U of S), Rachel Martz (U of S) Amber McLean (U of S)

Community Agencies: Saskatoon Health Region (Humboldt), Saskatoon Health Region (Lanigan), Partners for Rural Family Support, Humboldt RCMP, George Bailey Centre (Humboldt), Humboldt and Area Drug Action Committee.

Support: Production of this document has been made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada.. Funding was also received from the Saskatoon Health Region with in-kind contributions from Prairie Women’s Health Centre of Excellence (PWHCE), The University of Saskatchewan (UofS) and St. Peter’s College (SPC).

Views, conclusions, and recommendations in this fact sheet do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the organizations or agencies sponsoring or contributing to the research in various ways.

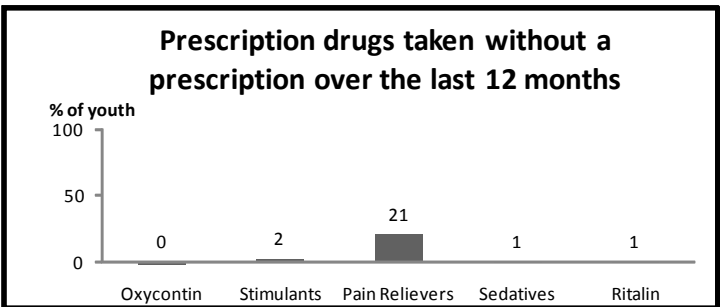
PRAIRIE WOMEN’S HEALTH
CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
RESEARCH ■ POLICY ■ COMMUNITY

If you use information from these fact sheets please reference it in the following way:

Martz, D. and A. Wagner (2008) Saskatchewan Rural Youth Healthy Lifestyles and Risk Behaviour Project Fact Sheet. (Health Canada DSCIF Study #6558-08-2005/3480566). Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan.

Fewer than 1% report using prescription drugs without a prescription

Students were asked about their prescription drug use, both with a prescription and without, over the last year. With the exception of pain relief, less than 1% of students have used oxycontin, stimulants, sedatives or Ritalin with a prescription. Over 28% of students have used pain relief because a doctor told them to. There were no strong relationships with the gender and age of students with the exception of using pain relievers. Older students used more pain relievers with a prescription because a doctor told them to.



When asked about their prescription drug use without a doctor’s prescription again use was low. Less than one percent used oxycontin, sedatives and Ritalin over the last year. However, more students used stimulants without a prescription (2.1%).

Over 21% of students used pain relievers without a prescription. There were no differences between boys and girls regarding their use of prescription medications without a prescription. There were also no differences between the different age groups.

“I don’t think prescription drugs are a problem over here cause you can get illegal drugs easier than you can get prescription drugs.”

“...you can also get marijuana for a little more and get a lot more messed up.”

“And not go through as much trouble”- Youth Focus Group Participants