

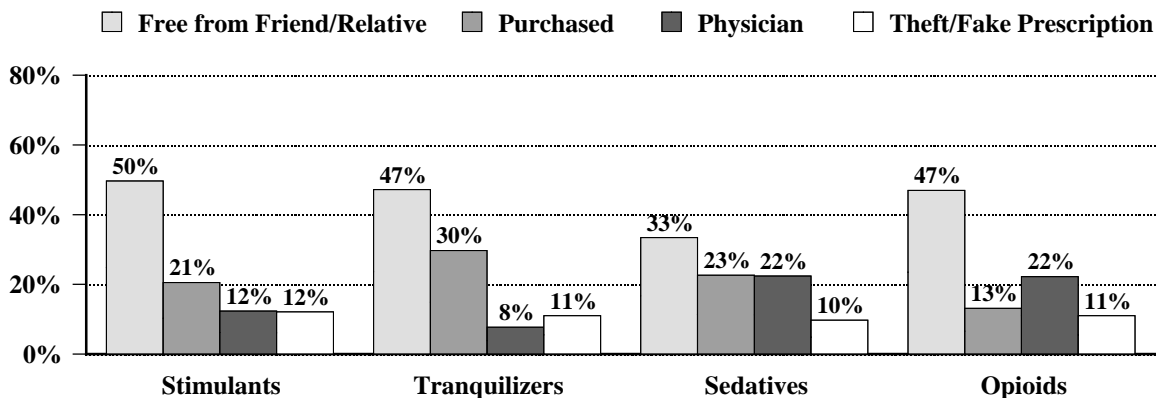
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Friends and Family Are Most Common Source of Prescription Drugs Misused by Youths

Friends and family are the most common source of prescription drugs misused* by youths in the U.S., according to an analysis of data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). Around one-half of youths who reported misusing prescription stimulants (50%), tranquilizers (47%), or sedatives (47%) in the past year said that they most recently obtained the medication for free from friends or family, as did one-third of those who reported the misuse of prescription opioids. The second most common source for obtaining stimulants, tranquilizers, and sedatives was purchasing from a friend/relative, drug dealer/stranger, or the internet, while the second most common source for obtaining prescription opioids was acquiring it from a physician (see figure below). Youths who obtained the medication by buying it were more likely to have concurrent substance use and to have ten or more misuse episodes than those who obtained the medications other ways (data not shown). According to the authors, “these results may help identify subgroups of adolescent prescription misusers who are most vulnerable to consequences from misuse or other substance use” (p. 828).

Most Recent Source of Prescription Medicines Misused in the Past Year Among Youths (Ages 12 to 17), 2005 and 2006



*Misuse was defined as “any intentional use of a medication with intoxicating properties outside of a physician’s prescription for a bona fide medical condition, excluding accidental misuse.”

NOTES: Respondents also reported that prescription medicines were obtained “some other way” (stimulants 5%; tranquilizers 4%; sedatives 12%; opioids 7%). Data are from 36,992 adolescents ages 12 to 17 participating in the 2005 and/or 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Of these youth, 8.3% reported any prescription drug misuse in the past year; 7% reported opioid misuse; 2% reported tranquilizer misuse; 2% reported stimulant misuse; and 0.4% reported sedative misuse.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Schepis, T.S., and Krishnan-Sarin, S., “Sources of Prescriptions for Misuse by Adolescents: Differences in Sex, Ethnicity, and Severity of Misuse in a Population-Based Study,” *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 48(8):828-836, 2009. For more information, contact Dr. Ty Schepis at ty.schepis@yale.edu.

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