

The Challenge of Opioid Addiction



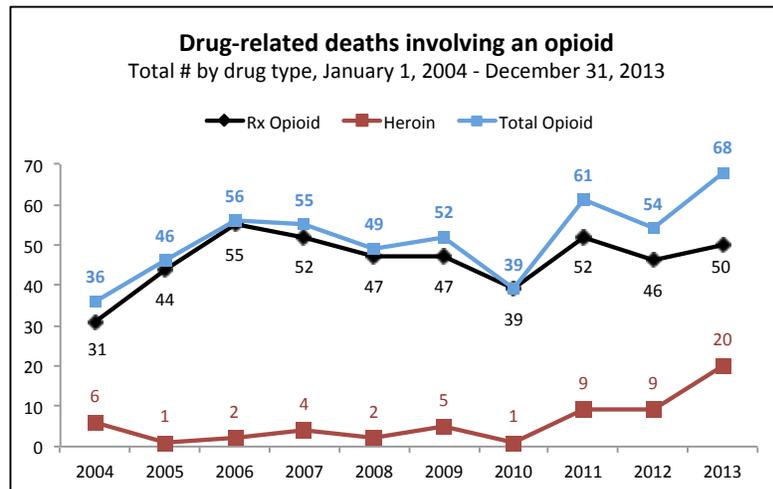
Facts

What are opioids?

Opioids – such as prescription painkillers and heroin – are powerful drugs. Opioids slow breathing and heartbeat, and act on the brain to relieve pain and increase feelings of pleasure.

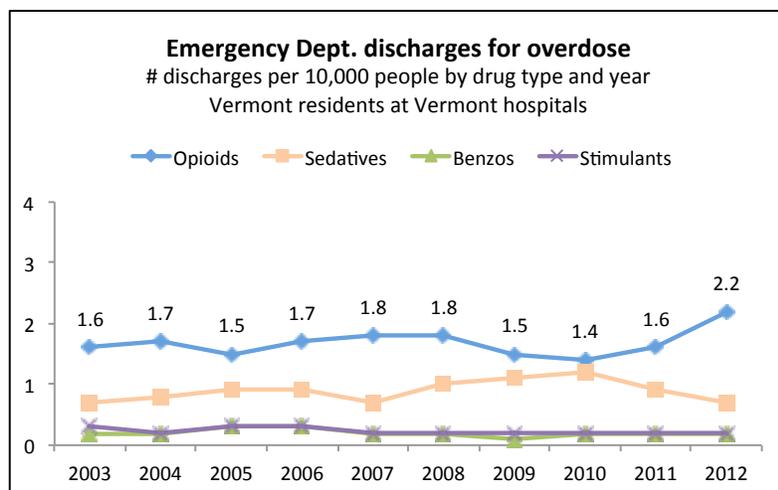
Why do we call opioid addiction a health crisis?

- 50+ Vermonters die from opioid poisoning every year.
- Deaths from heroin doubled from 2012 to 2013.
- Emergency treatment for opioid poisoning rose in 2012.
- Addiction is a lifelong chronic disease. Young people are most at risk – and the costs are high for those addicted, their families and all of us.



Vermont Department of Health/Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

NOTE: Total opioid includes unidentified opioids. Heroin and prescription opioids are not mutually exclusive



Vermont Department of Health/Vermont Uniform Hospital Discharge Data Set

Facts

Too many Vermonters misuse or abuse opioids

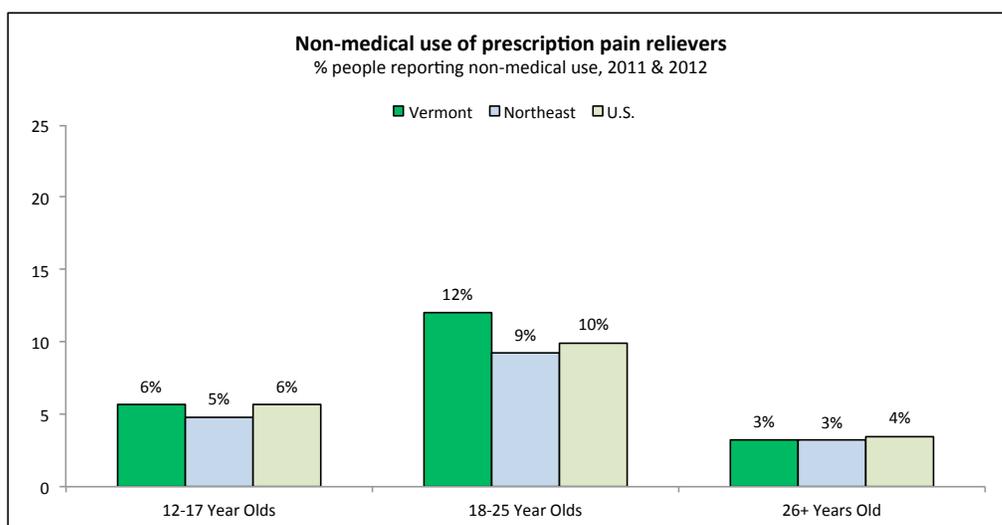
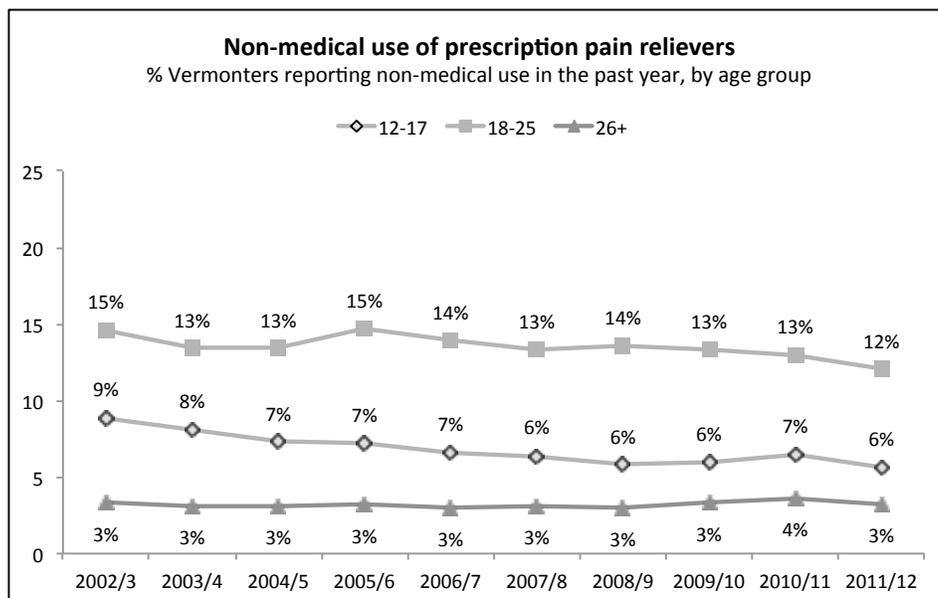
— putting them on the path to addiction, a lifelong chronic illness that requires effective medical treatment and lifestyle changes. Misusing prescription painkillers can lead to heroin use. Heroin use is 19 times higher among people who have used prescription painkillers for non-medical reasons than among those who have not.

— *National Survey on Drug Use & Health 2012 (NSDUH)*

Young adults are most at risk for opioid addiction.

- Vermonters age 18-25 have one of the highest rates for non-medical use of painkillers.
- More than one-quarter of the nearly 4,000 Vermonters in treatment for opioid abuse are young adults.
- Nearly half of young people who inject heroin report having abused prescription opioids before starting to use heroin.

— *National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)*



Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration/National Survey on Drug Use & Health (NSDUH) 2012

There is good news: the trend in opioid abuse is not growing.

Three surveys show that misuse/abuse has been steady over time for all age groups:

- 5% of Vermonters age 12+ have taken a prescription pain reliever for non-medical reasons in the past year, unchanged since 2003, and fewer than 1% report using heroin in the past year, similar to the U.S. prevalence. —*National Survey on Drug Use & Health 2012*
- In 2012, 8% of Vermonters age 18+ have ever misused a prescription pain reliever, and 1% used in the past month, unchanged since 2007 when first measured. —*Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Survey*
- In 2013, 11% of 9th-12th graders have ever used a prescription pain reliever not prescribed to them, down from 13% in 2011, 5% misused a pain reliever in the past month, and 2% have ever used heroin. —*Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey*