

# The DAWN Report

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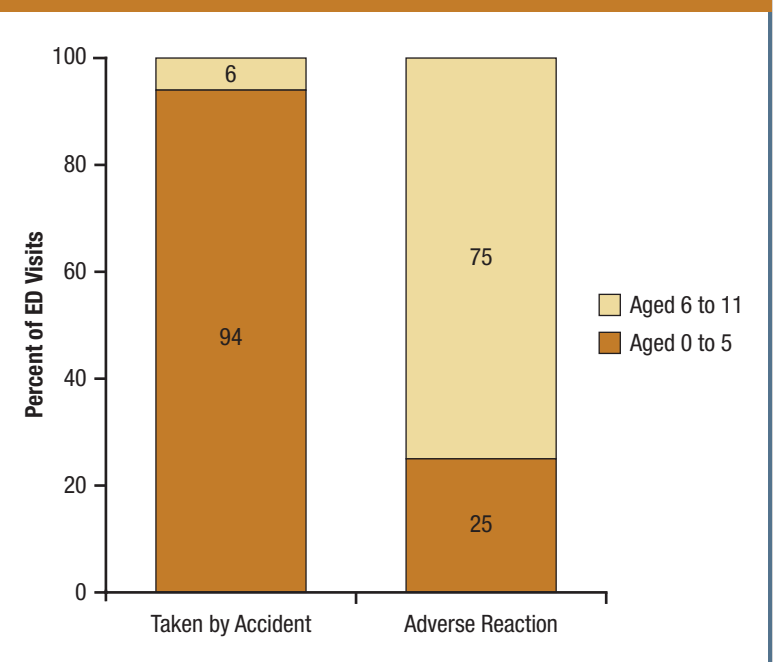


## Emergency Department Visits among Children: Psychotherapeutic Drugs Involved in Adverse Reactions or Taken by Accident

Increased treatment with psychotherapeutic drugs among children may create unintended health risks.<sup>1</sup> Psychotherapeutic drugs include those that treat depression, psychosis, anxiety, sleeplessness, and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) collects information on drug-related emergency department (ED) visits, including those involving adverse reactions to drugs<sup>2</sup> or accidentally taking drugs prescribed for others.<sup>3</sup> Between 2005 and 2011, children aged 0 to 11 made an annual average of 26,713 ED visits involving psychotherapeutic drugs. Most ED visits related to accidentally taking psychotherapeutic drugs prescribed for others (94 percent) involved children aged 0 to 5. Most ED visits related to adverse reactions to such drugs (75 percent) involved children aged 6 to 11 (Figure).

For younger children, accidentally taking psychotherapeutic drugs prescribed for others is a health risk. Likewise, a health risk for older children is having adverse reactions to psychotherapeutic drugs that are prescribed for them. Many drug-related reactions, such as side effects, can be treated during regular doctor visits. However, prescribing doctors should tell parents about possible reactions that require immediate attention in the ED. Risks for younger children can be reduced by keeping medicine out of children's reach at all times. For suggestions on safely storing drugs, please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/features/medicationstorage/>.

Reasons for Emergency Department (ED) Visits Involving Psychotherapeutic Drugs among Children Aged 0 to 11, by Age Group: 2005 to 2011



1. Zito, J. M., Safer, D. J., DosReis, S., Gardner, J. F., Magder, L., Soeken, K., Boles, M., Lynch, F., & Riddle, M. A. (2003). Psychotropic practice patterns for youth: A 10-year perspective. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, 157(1), 17-25.
2. Adverse reaction visits include adverse drug reactions, side effects, drug-drug interactions, and drug-alcohol interactions experienced when drugs are taken as prescribed or directed for a therapeutic purpose.
3. Accidental ingestion visits include those in which an individual accidentally or unknowingly used a prescription drug, over-the-counter medication, or dietary supplement.

Source: The Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) is a public health surveillance system that monitors drug-related hospital emergency department (ED) visits and drug-related deaths to track the impact of drug use, misuse, and abuse in the United States.

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