

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH HIGH OTC ANALGESICS USE AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Objective: Seventy percent of girls and 50% of boys aged 15–16 years in Norway use over-the-counter (OTC) analgesics during a four weeks period. This study examines health, socio-demographic, and lifestyle factors associated with high OTC analgesics use among adolescents.

Material and method: All final grade pupils in all six junior high schools in urban Drammen received a questionnaire; 367 (59 %) of 626 participated. Pupils, who had used OTC analgesics daily or weekly during the last four weeks, were categorized as “high users”.

Results: Twenty-six percent of pupils used OTC analgesics daily or weekly; No gender difference. Bivariate analyses showed high use of analgesics among pupils reporting poor health or pain in three or more organ systems. High use was also related to poor family economy, low educational plans, or not living with parents, as were a number of lifestyle factors such as daily smoking, frequent binge drinking, working outside home, intake of caffeine drinks, and experience of pain due to tight time schedules and irregular meals. A logistic regression analysis including the significant health, socio-demographic, and lifestyle factors revealed that high use of OTC analgesics was associated with report of pain in three or more organ systems, low educational plans, experience of binge drinking episodes, daily intake of caffeine, and working outside home.

Conclusion: High use of OTC analgesics among adolescents is not only associated with experience of pain, but also with low educational plans and a negative or stressful lifestyle.

Keywords: Adolescents, health, analgesics