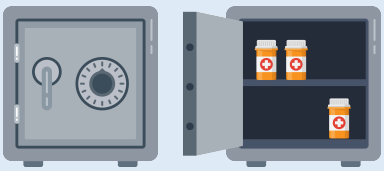
Self-Inflicted Drug Poisonings Among North Carolina Youth, 2020-2024

Prevention is Key

Youth (10-18) drug* poisonings represent a significant and increasing public health issue in North Carolina. Distinguishing between self-inflicted and unintentional poisonings is important to understand in order to inform prevention efforts.

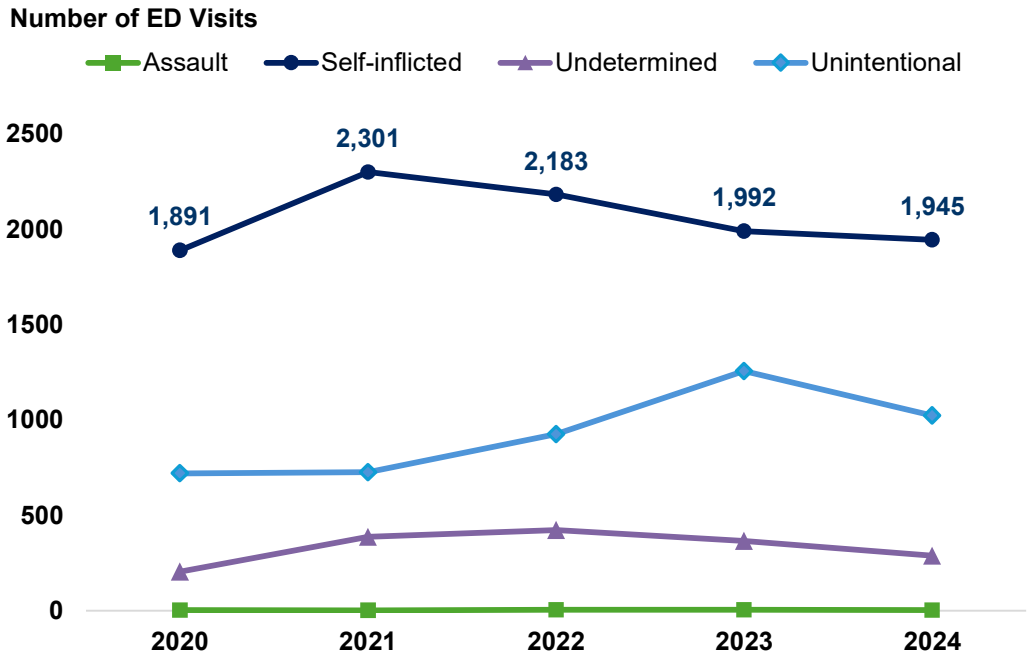
Fortunately, interventions such as Lock Your Meds are effective at preventing poisonings, both unintentional and self-inflicted. Increased adoption of these interventions can help address self-inflicted poisonings among youth populations in North Carolina.



*drug refers to any prescription medication, over the counter, or illicit drug use

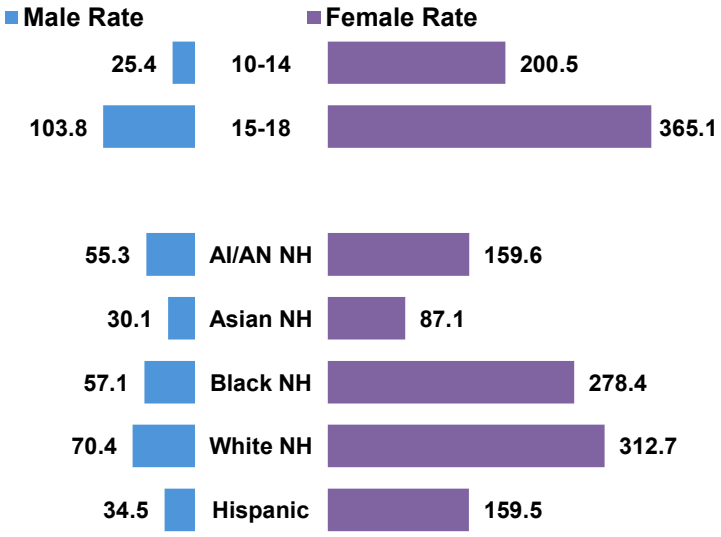
The majority of youth drug poisoning emergency department (ED) visits are self-inflicted.^

Youth (10-18) Drug Poisoning ED Visits by Intent, 2020-2024



^Self-inflicted injury describes when someone injures themselves on purpose. Not all self-inflicted injury is with the intent to die.

Youth Self-Inflicted Drug Poisoning ED Visit Rates (per 100,000) by Demographic Group, 2020-2024



AI/AN = American Indian/Alaska Native; NH = non-Hispanic

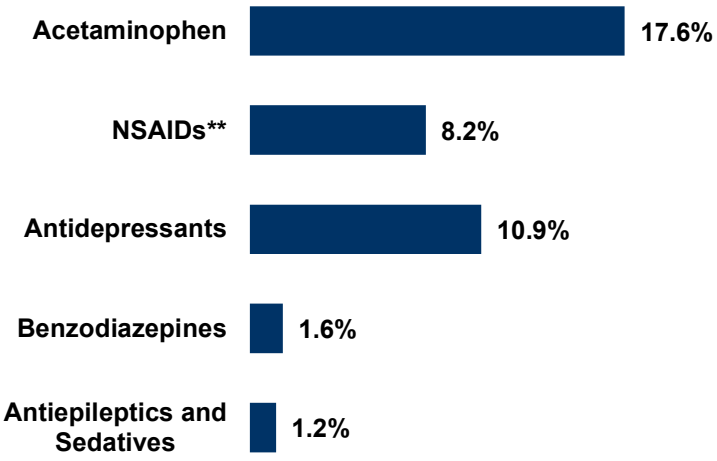
• The youth self-inflicted drug poisoning rate was highest for females ages 15-18 (365.1 ED visits per 100,000 population) followed by White NH females (312.7 ED visits per 100,000).

• The overall rate of youth self-inflicted drug poisoning ED visits are 4.5 times higher for females compared to males.

• Over-the-counter (OTC) medication makes up a large percentage of youth self-inflicted poisonings seen in the ED, with acetaminophen present in 17.6% of visits.

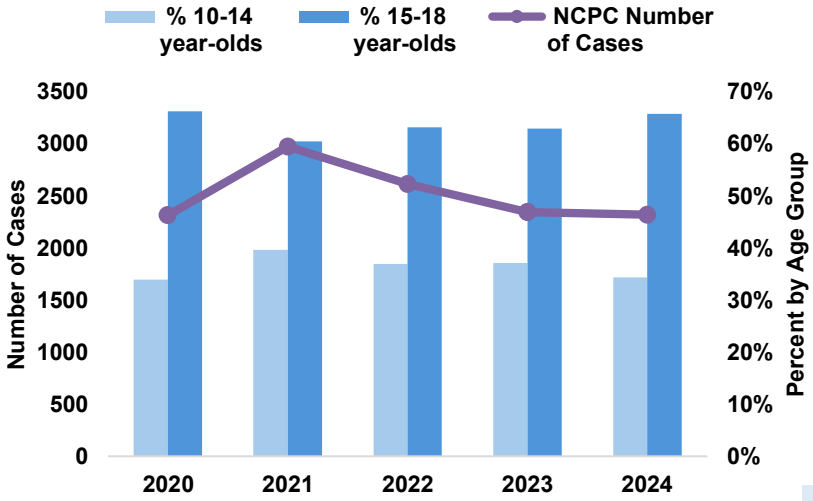
• Because youth use OTC medications such as acetaminophen to self-harm, it is important to lock away all medication, both prescription and over-the-counter.

Youth Self-Inflicted Drug Poisoning ED Visits by Drug Type, 2020-2024

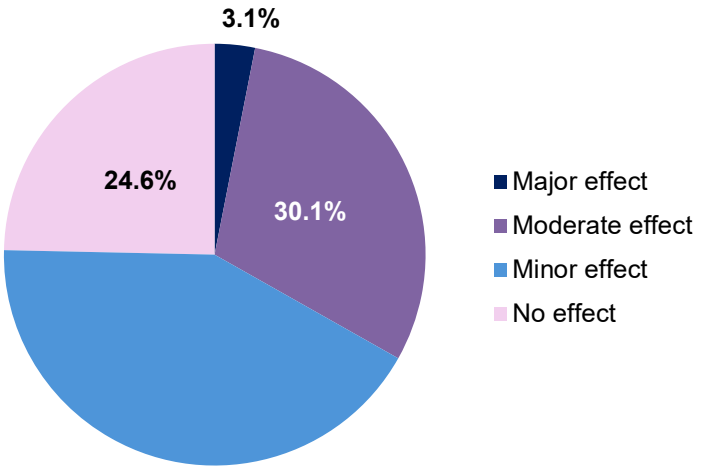


**NSAIDs= Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs; examples include ibuprofen and aspirin

Youth Suspected Suicide Attempt Poisoning Cases by Age Group, North Carolina Poison Control (NCPC), 2020-2024



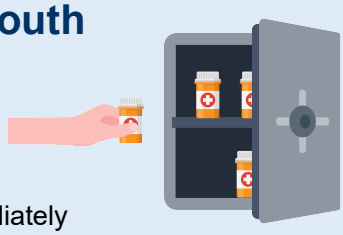
Youth Suspected Suicide Attempt Poisoning NCPC Cases by Medical Outcome, 2020-2024



- The majority of suicide attempt NCPC cases among youth were ages 15-18 (63.5%).
- Over the five-year period (2020-2024), there were six cases of youth self-inflicted poisonings reported by poison control that resulted in death.
- Major effects are life threatening or result in significant disability, whereas minor and moderate effects can be resolved with appropriate treatment. Thankfully, death and major effects weren't common, however, even minor effects are worth preventing.

*NCPC has a category for suicide attempt cases, but not a general self-inflicted category. While there is likely a large overlap between ED self-inflicted poisoning visits and NCPC suicide attempt cases, it is important to clarify that not all self-inflicted injury is with the intent to die.

Ways To Keep Youth Safe At Home



- Put all medicines in a safe lockbox
- Put medicine away immediately after each use, even if there will be more doses in a few hours
- Avoid buying over-the-counter pain medications in bulk

It's normal for young people to experience emotional ups and downs, but ongoing changes in mood, sleep, appetite, behavior, or interest in activities may be signs they need extra support. Check in during calm, everyday moments, listen without judgment, and remind them it's okay to talk about difficult feelings. Your care, reassurance, and willingness to listen can make a meaningful difference and help them get support early.

State Resource Partners

North Carolina Poison Control
https://www.ncpoisoncontrol.org

NC Injury and Violence Prevention Branch
Suicide Prevention:
https://injuryfreenc.dph.ncdhhs.gov/preventionResources/Suicide.htm

Overdose Data: https://www.dph.ncdhhs.gov/programs-services/chronic-disease-and-injury/injury-and-violence-prevention-branch/north-carolina-overdose-epidemic-data

NCDHHS Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services
https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/mhddsus

NCDHHS Division of Child and Family Well-being
https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/division-child-and-family-well-being

National Resources

Lock Your Meds
https://lockyourmeds.org

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center
https://www.sprc.org

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
https://afsp.org

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org

988 | SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Public Health
Injury and Violence Prevention Branch

NC DETECT

Data Source: NC DETECT, ED visits and NCPC cases; data as of 8/13/2025