Stimulants are drugs that increase—or "stimulate"—activities and processes in the body. This increased activity can boost alertness, attention, and energy. It also can raise your blood pressure and make your heart beat faster. The most common stimulants are cocaine, methamphetamine and prescription stimulants (generally used to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and narcolepsy).

Stimulant misuse, which includes using illicit stimulants, taking someone else's prescription drugs or taking them not as prescribed, can cause serious health effects, addiction and death.

The Number of Prescription Stimulants Dispensed in Vermont is Increasing

VPMS tracks prescriptions that are dispensed by Vermont-licensed pharmacies. Since 2013, there has been an increase in the number of stimulants dispensed, and Vermont has consistently ranked within the top three states in the U.S. for methylphenidate (commonly sold under the name Ritalin) distribution, based on the number of grams per 100,000 people. In 2017, over 23,000 people were dispensed stimulants in Vermont, a 14% increase since 2013. The percent of stimulant prescriptions dispensed by gender was nearly equal in 2017. In previous years, slightly more males received stimulant prescriptions.

People under 17 years of age receive the highest proportion of stimulant prescriptions. However, there have been increases in the proportion of stimulant prescriptions in the 35-44 and 65 and older age groups since 2013. The type of stimulant prescription dispensed also varies by age. Individuals 17 and younger are dispensed the largest percentage of Ritalin and Vyvanse, whereas, Adderall is dispensed most often to individuals 25 to 34. Slightly more males are dispensed Ritalin and Vyvanse, while slightly more females are dispensed Adderall.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of Prescription Stimulant Type Dispensed by Age</th>
<th>17 and younger</th>
<th>18 to 24</th>
<th>25 to 34</th>
<th>35 to 44</th>
<th>45 to 54</th>
<th>55 to 64</th>
<th>65 and older</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adderall</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vyvanse</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritalin</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The rate of stimulant prescriptions per 100 Vermont residents increased in every county between 2013 and 2017.1 The same four counties (Windham, Bennington, Washington, Chittenden) had the highest rates of stimulant prescriptions in both years.1 Windham had the highest rate.1

**Nearly One-Third of Adults Who Use Prescription Stimulants Misuse Them**

Most people who misuse prescription stimulants do so to increase alertness or concentration, and they most often get them from friends or relatives.3 An analysis of the 2015 and 2016 National Survey on Drug Use & Health (NSDUH) found nearly 6.6% or 16 million of US adults used prescription stimulants in the past year. Of the adults who used prescription stimulants (11 million) a small proportion (0.4 million) had prescription stimulant use disorders. Nearly one-third (5 million) misused them at least once.4
Vermonters Aged 18-25 Misuse Stimulants More than Other Age Groups

In 2016/2017 Vermont ranked #1 in the U.S. for past-year cocaine use among 18-25 year olds and use is on the rise.\(^5\) This age group also does not perceive casual use (once per month) of cocaine to be a great health risk.\(^5\)

Methamphetamine use in Vermont remains low, similar to the U.S. overall.\(^5\)

Stimulant Use Among Vermont High Schoolers Has Decreased

Since 2009, misuse of prescription stimulants, cocaine and methamphetamine has decreased among Vermont high schoolers.

Franklin and Chittenden Counties reported significantly lower misuse of prescription stimulants and cocaine, respectively, in 2017 than the state overall.\(^6\) However, Washington County reported a higher rate of prescription stimulant misuse than Vermont overall.\(^6\)

Hospital Visits Related to Stimulant Use Have Increased

In the U.S., there has been a recent increase in hospitalizations and emergency department visits involving stimulants.\(^7\) Specifically, visits involving non-fatal cocaine and methamphetamine poisonings increased between 2014 and 2015.\(^7\) In Vermont, the rate per 10,000 hospital visits due to non-fatal stimulant overdoses remained the same over time, but diagnoses related to misuse and stimulant use disorder have increased.\(^8\)
Caledonia, Chittenden, Franklin, Rutland and Washington Counties showed the greatest increase in the rate of hospital visits associated with stimulant misuse between 2013 and 2017, with Washington County having the highest rates both years. Only Bennington County had a decrease.

Drug-Related Fatalities Involving Stimulants Have Increased Among Vermonters

From 2014 to 2018, there were 152 fatalities involving stimulants and nearly all (91%) involved cocaine. Deaths involving prescription stimulants have slightly increased but remain low. Many (81%) stimulant-related fatalities also involve an opioid. The combination of cocaine and fentanyl accounted for over one-third of opioid-related fatalities in 2018.

Windham County had the highest rate of stimulant-related fatalities as well as the highest rate of opioid-related fatalities in 2018.
More Vermonters Seeking Treatment Say They Misuse Stimulants

More people seeking care for substance use disorders in the state treatment system are reporting that they are misusing stimulants in addition to other substances, primarily opioids.

In 2018, almost half of people seeking treatment for stimulant misuse were 25-34 years old and were slightly more likely to be male than female. 10

Vermont’s Response

While Vermont is focused on the harms of opioid use disorder, it is critical to not lose sight of trends in other substance use. Vermont data are showing increased use of stimulants and stimulant prescriptions.

The Vermont Department of Health is employing a comprehensive public health response to address stimulant misuse in Vermont that includes needs assessment, surveillance, education, intervention, treatment and recovery supports.

For more information on stimulants: healthvermont.gov/stimulants

For data questions: Amanda Jones, Amanda.jones@vermont.gov

References and Data Sources:

6. Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS): healthvermont.gov/yrbs
8. Vermont Uniform Hospital Discharge Data System: healthvermont.gov/HospitalDischargeData
10. Substance Abuse Treatment Information System (SATIS)

Stimulant availability, use, morbidity and mortality are increasing.