

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

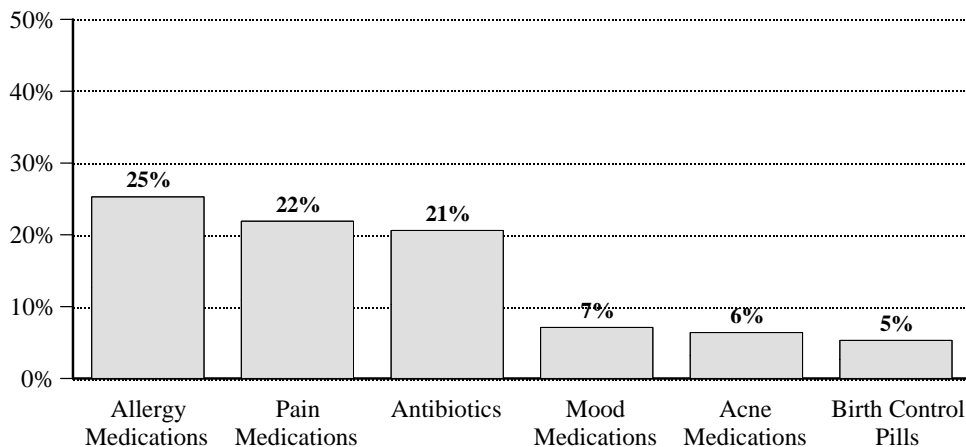
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***One-Third of Americans Report Sharing Prescription Medications;
Allergy, Pain, and Antibiotics Most Commonly Shared***

Americans frequently share prescription medications, according to a survey of a convenience sample of 700 people in 10 cities across the United States. Thirty-four percent of the respondents reported sharing prescription medications in the past year, either by loaning their medications to someone else (7%), borrowing medications from someone else (11%), or both (16%). The types of medications most frequently shared were allergy medications (25%), pain medications (22%), and antibiotics (21%; see figure below). According to the authors, these findings suggest that “a large number of individuals are at risk for loss of warnings and instructions, reduced likelihood of appropriate use and compliance, and numerous related consequences, including reduced care seeking, increased perceptions of ineffective treatment, increased antibiotic resistance, and increased risk of side effects” (p. 1119).

Prescription Medications Shared by Survey Participants, 2006

(n=700 respondents ages 12 to 44 interviewed in public spaces in 10 U.S. cities)



NOTES: The authors note that while the relatively small sample size may not be representative of the entire U.S., it is “well distributed across a variety of demographic characteristics.” In addition, the findings may underrepresent the prevalence of prescription medication sharing since the “participant responses may have been influenced by the belief that medication sharing is an illicit or illegal behavior” (p. 1119).

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Goldsworthy, R.C., Schwartz, N.C., and Mayhorn, C.B. “Beyond Abuse and Exposure: Framing the Impact of Prescription-Medication Sharing,” *American Journal of Public Health* 98(6):1115-1121. For more information, contact Dr. Richard Goldsworthy at rick@academicedge.com.