




All Doped Up

Between 1996 and 2005, Reuters reports,  the use of anti-depressants doubled to nearly 10 percent of the American population. In 1996, the figure was 13 million. Now, it's 27 million.

Those numbers, obviously, should cause some worry.

For one thing, the suicide rate for middle-aged people is rising, Reuters reported, suicide being a risk factor in taking antidepressants. According to the *Journal of Preventative Medicine*, the suicide rate for middle-aged Americans [increased 16 percent](#) from 1999 to 2008, which roughly coincides with the massive increase in anti-depressant use.

Indeed, such is the risk for suicide that [each container carries](#) a "black box warning." The Food and Drug Administration issued the mandate to carry the warning in 2007. Studies had shown the drugs increased the risk of suicide in teens and children. Clearly, as [the psychiatrist quoted](#) for the Reuters piece suggested, they might just increase the risk for the middle-aged as well.

For another thing, while these folks, most of them baby boomers, are usually killing only themselves, their children aren't. The baby boomers' kids [take others with them](#) before they commit suicide.

Recall that several of the notorious school shooters were taking such medications, most notably Eric Harris, one of the two shooters at Columbine High in Colorado. Harris and his partner, Dylan Klebold, [slaughtered 12 students and a teacher](#), while injuring 21, before killing themselves. Harris [was taking Luvox](#).

Kipland P. Kinkel [was taking Prozac](#) when [he shot up](#) Thurston High in Springfield, Oregon, killing two and injuring 25. Kinkel is serving life in prison.

Jeff Weise, [who murdered nine](#), including his grandfather and five students at Red Lake High School in Minnesota, before killing himself, also [was taking Prozac](#).

Investigators also believed Cho Seung Hui was taking an antidepressant when [he massacred](#) 30 persons at Virginia Tech, then killed himself, in 2007.

Given the school shootings, one wonders whether the drugs increase the risk not just of suicide but of violent behavior as well. One peer-reviewed journal [flatly asserts](#) that antidepressants foment violent behavior.

Yet even more frightening than nearly 10 percent of Americans taking drugs is one subset of the population taking them. It isn't just baby boomers and their teenagers. Even two- and four-year-olds [are getting doped](#). No one, of course, knows what [these drugs](#) do to a developing brain.

The point here isn't that some people don't need anti-depressants. Depression is a real and debilitating condition. Some medicine may help. Therapy may help as well. Point is, common sense should tell us that the number of people suffering real depression could not have doubled in a less than 10 years.

That leaves the question of why so many Americans are popping pills. The report says the stigma associated with treatment for depression has abated, and it's less expensive to take a drug than see a therapist. But given that more Americans than ever are taking the drugs, and the patients receiving



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on August 5, 2009

them are taking more of the drugs than ever, another answer is obvious: the psychiatrists who prescribe them, and the drug companies who sell them, are [making a fortune](#). Sales topped \$11 billion in 2008. Two drugs, Effexor and Cymbalta, captured half the market share, \$6.63 billion.

It's a fast way to make a buck.

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