

# Newborns hooked on painkillers is new American epidemic

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It looks like the penchant for prescription drug addiction doesn't skip a generation.

A new report issued by the White House Office on Drug Control Policy reveals that not only is prescription narcotic abuse the fastest growing drug problem in America, but more and more children are being born already hooked.

In the state of Florida alone, prescription drug overdose deaths are up more than 250 percent in less than a decade. Even more alarming, however, is the number of children in the Sunshine State being born as juvenile junkies. State health records show that 635 children were born already hooked on prescription drugs in only the first half of 2010.

*"They go through withdrawal symptoms,"* Mary Osuch, head nurse at Broward General Medical Center's neonatal intensive care unit, tells CNN. *"They're crampy, miserable. They sweat. They can have rapid breathing. Sometimes, they can even have seizures."*

Recent statistics released by IMS note that 80 percent of the world's prescription painkiller users and abusers come out of America. The Centers for Disease Control adds that prescription painkillers have surpassed hard drugs as the cause of fatal overdoses in recent years.

Marsha Carrant of the Susan B. Anthony Recovery Center near Fort Lauderdale, FL says she notices the increase in pregnant woman coming into her facility with addiction to prescription pills. *"In the very beginning, it was really 100% crack cocaine,"* she says, but notes that now it is more prescription drug cases.

Earlier this year, Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi revealed that many expecting mothers in Florida are unaware that drugs like oxycodone and Xanax could cause complications in their pregnancies and impact the lives of their unborn children. Along with Florida Senate President Mike Haridopolos, Bondi met with health care officials back in May to discuss the problem.

*"We've got to stop this,"* Bondi told the Miami Herald in May of this year. They note that at St. Joseph's Women's Hospital in Tampa, FL, up to 20 percent of the babies admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit were treated for withdrawal.

Statewide, that figure in 2010 was closer to 1,300 newborns.