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# Opioid deaths cut US life expectancy by 2.5 months, study suggests

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**Overdose deaths from any kind of drug, including opioids, slashed about 3.4 months off overall life expectancy in the United States between 2000 and 2015, a new study suggests.**

By [Matt Rocheleau](#)

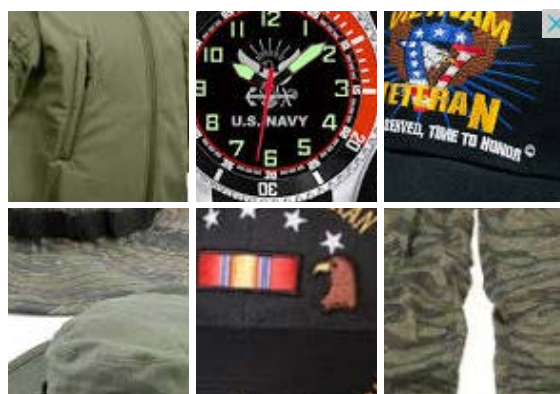
GLOBE STAFF SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

Deaths from opioid overdoses cut an estimated 2.5 months off the overall life expectancy of people in the United States between 2000 and 2015, according to a new study by federal health researchers.

It's the latest grim statistic to illustrate just how devastating the opioid crisis has been, and — to make it worse — the figure probably underestimates what's really happened.

That's because, researchers said, a specific drug is not recorded in as many as one-quarter of drug-poisoning deaths.

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Overdose deaths from any kind of drug, including opioids, slashed about 3.4 months off overall life expectancy in the United States between 2000 and 2015, according to [the study](#) by officials from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and published in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

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In 2000, about 17,400 deaths were from drug poisoning, including about 8,400 attributed to opioids,

the study said.

In 2015, the figures were about 52,400 and about 33,100, respectively.

From 2014 to 2015, life expectancy in the United States dropped, an exceedingly rare event. Experts have said they believe the opioid epidemic played a significant role.

“Preventing opioid-related poisoning deaths will be important to achieving more robust increases in life expectancy once again,” the study’s authors wrote.

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Other one-year declines in the overall US life expectancy occurred in 1993, when the country was in the throes of the AIDS epidemic, and in 1980, when there was a particularly deadly flu season, the Associated Press [reported](#) late last year.

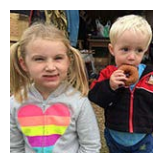
Even with the recent year-over-year decline, the life expectancy in 2015 of 78.8 years was higher by about two years than in 2000, the study said.

While death rates for some causes increased during that 15-year span, including for opioid overdoses as well as Alzheimer’s disease and chronic liver disease, death rates for other key causes decreased, including heart disease, cancer, cerebrovascular diseases, diabetes, influenza and pneumonia, chronic lower respiratory diseases, and kidney disease, the study found.

*Matt Rocheleau can be reached at [matthew.rocheleau@globe.com](mailto:matthew.rocheleau@globe.com). Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](https://twitter.com/mrochele).*

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