

Xylazine

According to the DEA, xylazine was found in 23% of seized fentanyl powder in 2022¹. Between 2015 and 2020, overdose deaths involving xylazine has increased 20-fold in all major US regions where xylazine testing was done².

Frequently Asked Questions About Xylazine

What is xylazine?

Xylazine, also known as “tranq,” “tranq dope,” “sleep-cut,” “Philly dope,” or “zombie drug,” is a non-opioid tranquilizer used in veterinary medicine to sedate animals that is not approved for any use with humans³. It has been increasingly found in illicit fentanyl and heroin supplies nationwide since 2015 and has more recently been found in some illicit stimulant supplies (cocaine, methamphetamine, MDMA, etc.) as well^{4,5}. While some people knowingly use xylazine on its own or in combination with fentanyl or heroin, many people do not know if their drug supply contains either fentanyl or xylazine^{3,4}.

Due to the severe effects of xylazine in combination with fentanyl and its growing role in overdose deaths nationwide, the White House designated fentanyl combined with xylazine an emerging threat to the United States on April 12th, 2023⁶.

What are the effects of xylazine?

Xylazine causes sedation and drowsiness, difficulty breathing, dangerously low blood pressure, and slow heart rate⁷. Repeated use of xylazine can result in dependence and severe withdrawal symptoms^{3,4,7}, and repeated injection has been associated with severe wounds and skin ulcers which can cause necrosis that may lead to amputation^{3,4}. Other symptoms that have been reported include high blood sugar, less bladder control, feeling tired frequently, slower reflexes, trouble swallowing, and severe dry mouth⁸.

What should I do if someone overdoses with xylazine?

While naloxone will not reverse the effects of xylazine, it is still recommended that naloxone be used since xylazine is often used in combination with opioids⁹. After administering 1 dose of naloxone, check to see if the breathing. If they are not breathing or have slow, shallow breaths, call 911 immediately and do rescue breaths for 3-5 minutes (see how to do rescue breathing here: bit.ly/Rescue-Breathing-Ex).

Once the person is breathing, do not administer any more naloxone! Xylazine will keep someone sedated until it wears off. Stay with the person until EMS arrives and keep an eye on them in case breathing slows or stops. Put the person in the rescue position on their side so they do not choke on vomit.

References

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