

XYLAZINE

Xylazine is a veterinary medicine that is not approved for human use;¹⁻⁵ it is a non-narcotic, non-opioid sedative, analgesic, anesthesia, muscle relaxant. Reports indicate an upward trend of xylazine in non-intentional fatal opioid overdoses. According to the Philadelphia Medical Examiner, an increase of less than 2% of cases to over 31% of cases occurred between 2010-2019.²⁻⁴ This steady increase is concerning due to the drug's prevalence for overdose and possible death due in part to the lack of reversal agents.



XylaMed, also known as xylazine is commonly used in veterinary medicine.

When used with opioids, it can decrease respiration and increase sedation.

Indications of Use^{1,3-5}

- Hypotension (low blood pressure)^{1,3-5}
- Central nervous system depression^{1,3-5}
- Bradycardia (slow heart rate)^{1,3-5}
- Open skin ulcers on injection sites (abscesses)^{3,4}
- Tissue hypoxemia (low oxygen in blood)³
- Increased potential to develop necrotizing wounds³
- Increased sedation and respiratory depression, compared to use of opioids alone, which increases risk of fatal overdose^{1,3-5}

When Xylazine is Suspected

There are currently **no reversal agents available for a xylazine overdose** and therefore **no safe amount of consumption**;¹ evidence shows that trace amounts can be fatal. Naloxone is recommended during an overdose to counteract the effects of opioids and provide a better chance of survival and recovery.¹⁻⁵



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Trends and Presence

- When xylazine is used with heroin or fentanyl it may be referred to as **tranq**, **tranq dope**, **tranq-fent**, and **rhinoceros tranquilizer**.^{3,4}
- Xylazine and heroin together produce a stronger high than heroin alone; this is called a synergistic toxic effect.²⁻⁴
- In 2020, more than 98% of xylazine fatal overdoses had fentanyl present.³
- Xylazine and fentanyl are used together due to the low cost and desired effect, such as shifting between being drowsy and wide awake, and helping to extend the high.²⁻⁴

Community Support & Awareness

- Educate frontline staff, harm reductionist, and user communities on signs, dangers, and first line treatment, such as rescue breaths, intubation, ventilation and IV fluids.^{3,4}
- Develop focus groups of opioid users that can bring understanding and awareness of current trends.⁴
- Create a protocol for law enforcement to test for xylazine in illicit drugs and needle seizures.⁴
- Adopt testing for xylazine in decedent's drug screen panel or use centralized labs with such established protocols.⁴
- Screen for xylazine in needle-syringe programs through residue testing at labs.²

REFERENCES

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