

Xylazine, often called “tranq,” is found being added to opioids like fentanyl or other drugs in the illicit drug supply. It is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in humans and can cause serious health problems.ⁱ You can protect your health and reduce your risk by knowing the facts about xylazine.ⁱⁱ

WHAT IS XYLAZINE?

Xylazine is a tranquilizer used for animals.ⁱⁱⁱ It depresses the central nervous system and can cause a person to become sleepy or even unconscious for hours. Xylazine can also cause memory loss, slowed breathing and heart rate, and dangerously low blood pressure.^{iv} Xylazine is most often found mixed into opioids like fentanyl to extend the effects. There are also reports of xylazine being found in other non-opioid drugs, like cocaine and methamphetamine (meth).

People who have used xylazine report losing track of time and not remembering what happened to them. People who use substances containing xylazine report being unable to stay awake, often passing out before they are in a safe space. This can put the person in danger of being hurt or robbed.

OVERDOSE REVERSAL

If you think someone has overdosed, call 911. Because xylazine can cause drowsiness and even unconsciousness, it is important to try to wake the person and check for breathing. If they are not breathing, administer naloxone and begin rescue breathing. Xylazine is usually present in combination with opioids like fentanyl. [Naloxone should always be used for all suspected overdoses, as it can reverse the effects of any opioids in the person’s system.](#)

Because xylazine can cause extreme drowsiness and unconsciousness, it may seem like the person is not responding to the naloxone because they may not wake up. The goal is to get the person breathing on their own even if they do not wake up. After giving the person naloxone, perform rescue breathing on the person. Put the person on their back, tilt their head back to straighten their airway, pinch their nose, place your mouth over theirs, and give them one rescue breath every five seconds. If the person doesn’t start breathing in 2-3 minutes, administer a second dose of naloxone and continue rescue breathing until the person starts breathing again. Continue to monitor their breathing and stay with them until medical help arrives.^v

Visit pa.gov/opioids to learn more about naloxone and how to get it.

HOW TO KNOW IF THERE IS XYLAZINE IN YOUR DRUGS

The only way to know for sure if your drugs contain xylazine is by [testing your drugs](#). Xylazine test strips are an easy way to check your drugs for xylazine. Check with your local harm reduction organization for availability. Testing can help determine if xylazine is present in illicit substances. Like fentanyl test strips, small samples may not always show xylazine present even though xylazine is present in another portion. Check with your local harm reduction organization for availability.

WOUND CARE

Using drugs containing xylazine can cause serious skin lesions and wounds.^{vi} These wounds can be difficult to treat and can spread quickly. Wounds can appear where a person has or has not injected

xylazine. The wounds can go as deep to the bone, becoming very serious and leading to the need for skin grafts or amputation of hands, feet, or limbs.^{vii}

Seek medical care if you have a wound or blister that gets larger or darker, smells bad, or is painful.^{viii} If you have a wound, try to keep it clean and wash it with warm water and soap. Do not use peroxide or alcohol to clean the wound and keep the wound covered, preferably with clean, non-stick medical gauze.^{ix}

TREATMENT AND RESOURCES

Treatment is available for people who have opioid use disorder and/or xylazine dependence. Anyone who is seeking treatment or substance use support for themselves or a loved one can call 1-800-662-HELP (4357). This free, confidential hotline is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and is staffed by trained professionals. A live chat is also available via text message at 717-216-0905 for those seeking help who may not be comfortable speaking to a helpline operator. Visit treatmentatlas.org to search for treatment options online.^x

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Next Distro: [Xylazine Wound Care: A Guide! — NEXT Distro](#)
- [Online Overdose Response Training by Savage Sisters Recovery and the PA Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs](#)

ⁱ https://beforeitstoolate.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/2023/04/2303_BHA_XylazinePeopleUsingDrugs.pdf

ⁱⁱ Id.

ⁱⁱⁱ Id.

^{iv} Id.

^v Id.

^{vi} <https://www.cureus.com/articles/98408-xylazine-induced-skin-ulcers-in-a-person-who-injects-drugs-in-philadelphia-pennsylvania-usa#!/>

^{vii} <https://issuu.com/nextdistro/docs/xylazine>

^{viii} Id.

^{ix} Id.

^x <https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/12044.pdf>