

LET'S BE CLEAR:

About xylazine (tranq)

What Is It?

Xylazine is an animal tranquilizer that is intended to be used by veterinarians. As of late, it's showing up in South Dakota's street drug supply, where it's known as tranq. Xylazine is often mixed with fentanyl and other illicit opioids creating a deadly hybrid called tranq dope. Xylazine or xylazine-containing drugs can be injected, snorted, swallowed or inhaled. Because xylazine is a depressant with similar effects to opioids, it makes it difficult to determine whether an individual has used one or both substances.

Why is Xylazine Being Added to Illicit Opioids?

It prolongs the effects of fentanyl.

Cutting fentanyl with xylazine is cheaper.

It adds street value by increasing its weight.

The Risks

Xylazine is not safe for human consumption. It may result in death or life-threatening reactions, like slowing or stopping breathing, serious skin infections and coma.

Injected use of xylazine has been associated with serious skin infections. Necrotic wounds, skin ulcers, abscesses and other skin complications may appear around the site of injection. These wounds can be severe and are distinctly different than other soft-tissue infections often associated with injection drug use.

Chronic use of xylazine or xylazine-containing drugs can lead to dependency and withdrawal if stopped suddenly. Symptoms of xylazine withdrawal include irritability, anxiety, hypertension and tachycardia. Medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) are not effective for treating xylazine withdrawal, and clinicians should be aware that patients with OUD may also be experiencing xylazine withdrawal and provide additional treatments for withdrawal management.

What to Do

If someone is suspected of overdosing on xylazine, follow these instructions.

Call 911.

Administer Naloxone.

Follow dispatch directions.

Inform EMS and trained medical professionals of the possibility of a xylazine involved overdose.

Naloxone will not reverse the effects of xylazine, making it that much more dangerous. However, it will reverse the effects of opioids mixed with xylazine.

The Facts & Figures

DEA forensic laboratory identifications of xylazine by region.

Region	2020	2021	Percent increase
Northeast	346	556	61%
South	198	580	193%
Midwest	110	118	7%
West	77	163	112%

Source: DEA

Number of xylazine-positive overdose deaths by region.

Region	2020	2021	Percent increase
Northeast	631	1,281	103%
South	116	1,423	1,127%
Midwest	57	351	516%
West	4	34	750%

Source: DEA



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