

Drug Facts: Xylazine



What Is Xylazine?

Xylazine is a non-opioid sedative that is approved for use in veterinary medicine. It is not safe for human use. Despite this, it is found in illegal drug supplies and linked to a large number of overdoses in the United States.

Xylazine is referred to as “Tranq” and “Tranq Dope”. While it is most often injected directly into the blood stream, it can also be sniffed or swallowed in pill form.

It is especially dangerous when it is adulterated (mixed) with Fentanyl (an opioid). As a result, this drug combination was classified an Emerging Threat by the White House’s Office of National Drug Control Policy in 2023.

Why Do People Take Xylazine ?

Some individuals consume drugs (such as fentanyl) mixed with xylazine to extend their sedating or euphoric effects. Others take it unknowingly. It is often added to cocaine, heroin and fentanyl by individuals who manufacture and sell illicit drugs. Users of these illegal drugs are often unaware of them being mixed with xylazine when they purchase them online or in their community.

How Does Xylazine Affect The Body?

Xylazine has dangerous effects on the human body. It can slow down a person’s heart rate and brain activity. It can cause difficulty with breathing and lead to dangerously low blood pressure. It can also cause the user to black out.

Repeated use can lead to dangerous abscesses, skin ulcers and other wounds. It has severe withdrawal symptoms, and when combined with opioids, such heroin or fentanyl, there is an increased risk of life-threatening overdoses.

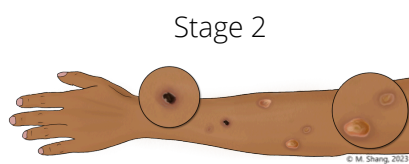
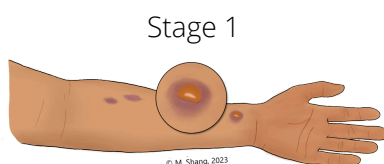
- Xylazine is especially dangerous when it is combined with opioids, and can lead to an overdose.
- It can cause serious skin wounds that can lead to amputation of limbs and may become life-threatening.
- Anyone with a suspected overdose should be immediately treated with Naloxone and 9-1-1 should be called.

What Are Wounds Caused By Xylazine?

Xylazine use can cause serious wounds that can lead to infection, and without treatment, may lead to amputation of an affected limb. They can appear whether the drug was injected or ingested by other means. They can appear anywhere on the body, not just at the site of injection.

Wounds can look like: blisters, “pinpoint” holes in the skin, large open sores, small purple bruises and scabs, or dark and black pieces of dead skin.

There are three stages of the development of the wound. It is vital to seek medical care at first sight of the wound.



Wheeler

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Seek medical care as soon as possible if you have a wound and:

- Skin that is red, hard and hot to the touch
- Fever and chills
- Thick, smelly green or yellow discharge seeping out of the wound
- Numb (loss of feeling) or tingling feeling on the skin
- Severe pain at wound site
- Inability to move body part where wound is located
- Pieces of skin falling off
- Bone is showing

How To Help Someone Overdosing On Xylazine

Naloxone: is a medicine used to quickly reverse an opioid overdose. It is life-saving. It should be given to **any suspected overdose**. It causes no harm if it used, whether an opioid is present or not.

While it will not reverse the effects of xylazine, it should still be used to reverse the effects of fentanyl or other opioids that may be mixed with the xylazine.

Contact Emergency Services: calling 9-1-1 is necessary because overdoses are considered medical emergencies. Be sure to stay with the individual overdosing until first responders arrive. In Connecticut, and other states, Good Samaritan laws offer protection from arrest and criminal charges for both the person who has overdosed and the person providing assistance in the emergent situation.

Perform Rescue Breaths: rescue breaths are extremely helpful for an overdosing individual whose breathing has slowed due to xylazine.

To give rescue breaths to adults, make sure their airway is clear: place one hand on the person's chin, tilt their head back and pinch their nose closed.

Place your mouth over theirs making a seal and give them two slow breaths. Watch for their chest to move (be sure it is their chest, not their stomach), and follow up with one breath every five seconds.

How Can A Person Who Uses Illegal Drugs Reduce The Dangers Of An Overdose?

- **Never use alone:** is it safer to ingest drugs while around a trusted individual who can give naloxone and call 9-1-1 in the case of an emergency. There are services for people who use for when they are going to take drugs and do not have a trusted contact to turn to for help. Never Use Alone is one example of this service.
- **Get Naloxone and learn how to use it:** Naloxone can reverse the effects of any opioids that are mixed with xylazine. Trainings for how to use naloxone and information about where to obtain it can be found at drugfreeCT.org, and at Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations (RBHAOs). It is also available over-the-counter as NARCAN Nasal Spray at pharmacies.
- **Know the risks of using illegal drugs with unknown ingredients:** since illegal drugs are unregulated, it is difficult to know what is in them. Manufacturers of illegal drugs often cut them with other drugs, such as xylazine.
- **Reduce Injection Related Risks:** Use a sterilized needle, use multiple injection sites, allow skin and veins to heal before next use or take the drugs a different way.
- **Test drugs before using:** there are commercially available test strips to check if xylazine is present within the drug.

Connecticut Resources

CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
www.ct.gov/DMHAS

CT Center for Harm Reduction
www.harmreduction-ct.org

CT Harm Reduction Alliance
www.ghhrc.org

Drug Free CT
www.drugfreect.org

National Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov

National Institute on Drug Abuse
www.nida.nih.gov

National Harm Reduction Coalition
harmreduction.org

