

# Saving Lives in Texas: The Facts on Xylazine and Medetomidine

Across Texas, the emergence of xylazine and medetomidine in illegal drugs is raising serious concern about the increase in medical emergencies and overdoses. People often don't know these substances are present, so their harmful effects can happen quickly. Knowing the facts is a critical step in preventing harm and saving lives.

## Xylazine and Medetomidine: Why They Are Dangerous

Xylazine, also known as "tranq" or "tranq dope," and medetomidine, also known as "rhino tranq," are powerful, non-opioid sedatives that are not safe for human use. Medetomidine is stronger and lasts longer than xylazine, which makes it especially dangerous.

Both drugs can cause serious reactions, including extreme sedation, slowed heart rate and slowed or stopped breathing. They may be mixed with illicit substances such as cocaine, heroin or fentanyl, usually without a person's knowledge. In some parts of the U.S., they have largely replaced opioids in the drug supply. Both can be life-threatening, especially when combined with opioids like fentanyl.

Neither substance is an opioid, so naloxone will not reverse their effects, though it should still be given if opioids are suspected. Xylazine and medetomidine have been linked to overdose deaths<sup>1</sup> across the country.



[TxOpioidResponse.org](https://TxOpioidResponse.org)

### While these drugs are in the body, they can cause:

- Extreme sedation or unresponsiveness.
- Reduced or slow breathing.
- Slowed heart rate (bradycardia) and low blood pressure (hypotension).

### When these drugs wear off, withdrawal can cause:

- Very high blood pressure (hypertension).
- Rapid heart rate (tachycardia).
- Severe agitation and discomfort.

## Where to Find Help

Knowing where to find naloxone or how to get medical care to treat opioid use disorder is critical. Find what's available near you:

[TxOpioidResponse.org/Resources](https://TxOpioidResponse.org/Resources)



## Preventing an Overdose Involving Opioids Mixed with Xylazine or Medetomidine

Xylazine and medetomidine are often combined with opioids, including fentanyl, significantly increasing the risk of an overdose.

- **Avoid use.** If you think a drug may contain xylazine or medetomidine, the best way to stay safe is to avoid using it.
- **Carry naloxone.** There is no approved medication to reverse overdoses involving xylazine or medetomidine in humans, but because these substances are often mixed with opioids, naloxone should still be given to reverse the opioid effects. Naloxone is available at many pharmacies in Texas without a prescription.<sup>2</sup>
- **Seek medical care for skin wounds.** Repeated xylazine use can cause serious skin wounds that can become infected, even at sites away from where an injection occurs. These wounds may have a similar appearance to injection site infections but are not responsive to traditional wound care treatment. If not treated promptly, these wounds may lead to amputation. Medetomidine does not cause these wounds.

## Responding to an Overdose Involving Opioids Mixed with Xylazine or Medetomidine

It may be difficult to tell if someone is experiencing an overdose, but since naloxone will not harm someone if opioids are not present in their system, it's always best to use it if you're worried it may be an overdose. Steps to follow:

- **Call 911 right away.**
- **Try to wake the person up.**
- **Tilt the person's head back and give naloxone, if available.** Naloxone will reverse an opioid overdose, even if the person remains sedated due to xylazine or medetomidine. Keeping it on hand could mean the difference between life and death, for you or someone else.
- **Begin rescue breathing or CPR, if needed.** Xylazine and medetomidine can slow or stop breathing, so breathing support is critical.
- **If the person is breathing on their own, place them on their side to prevent choking.** Do not interrupt rescue breathing or CPR to do this unless the person vomits and their airway needs to be cleared.
- **Stay with the person until emergency services arrive.**