



Saving Lives in Texas: The Facts on Xylazine



WHAT IS XYLAZINE AND WHY IS IT DANGEROUS?

Xylazine, also known as “tranq” or “tranq dope” is a non-opioid sedative intended for use in animals. It’s not safe for human use and may cause serious reactions, including extreme sedation, slowed heart rate, and slowed or stopped breathing. Xylazine may be mixed with illicit substances (such as cocaine, heroin or fentanyl), often without a person’s knowledge. It can be life-threatening, especially when combined with opioids like fentanyl. Xylazine has been linked to an increasing number of overdose deaths (also referred to as poisonings).

Common symptoms of xylazine use include:

- Unresponsiveness and decreased consciousness
- Low blood pressure (hypotension)
- Slow heart rate (bradycardia)
- Reduced or slow breathing





HOW TO STAY SAFE

Xylazine is often combined with opioids, including fentanyl, which significantly increases the risk of an overdose. Here are some ways to keep yourself and your loved ones safe from a possible overdose involving opioids and xylazine:

- **Avoid use.** If you think a drug may contain xylazine, the best way to stay safe is to avoid using it—especially alone.
- **Use xylazine test strips.** Xylazine test strips can help reduce your risk of harm. These small strips of paper are used to detect the presence of xylazine in other drugs. You can order xylazine test strips online from manufacturers. You can also contact your local Outreach, Screening, Assessment and Referral (OSAR) program for xylazine test strips, though their availability may vary by OSAR.¹
- **Carry naloxone.** There is no approved medication to reverse xylazine overdose in humans. However, since xylazine is often mixed with opioids, naloxone should be given to reverse the effect of any opioids taken with xylazine. Naloxone is available at many pharmacies in Texas without a prescription. Naloxone has no effect on someone who does not have opioids in their system, so it's always best to use it if you think someone is overdosing.
- **Seek medical care for skin wounds.** Repeated xylazine use can cause serious skin wounds that can become infected later, 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, it may lead to amputation.



HOW TO RESPOND TO AN OVERDOSE INVOLVING OPIOIDS AND XYLAZINE

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

1. Call 911 right away.
2. Try to wake the person up.
3. 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. Keeping it on hand could mean the difference between life and death—for you or someone else.
4. Begin rescue breathing or CPR. This is especially helpful for people who have used xylazine because it causes breathing to slow down.
5. Turn the person on their side to prevent choking.
6. Stay with the person until emergency services arrive.



WHERE TO FIND HELP

Knowing where to find naloxone or how to get the medical care that's necessary to treat opioid use disorder is critical. To learn more about what's available near you, visit TxOpioidResponse.org/resources.

1. Xylazine test strips are allowable for purchase by OSARs contingent upon xylazine not being a controlled substance.

