Xylazine in NORTH CAROLINA:

As seen across many parts of the United States, people in North Carolina are also being affected by a drug supply contaminated with xylazine. People who use drugs, drug researchers, and harm reduction advocates have worked hard to ensure their communities have access to drug checking resources. Data from the UNC Drug Analysis Lab shows that xylazine is showing up in the drug supply in North Carolina.

XYLAZINE IS SHOWING UP IN THE DRUG SUPPLY

WHAT *is it?*

Xylazine is a powerful sedative and tranquilizer that is used in veterinary medicine. Illicit xylazine is commonly found in a powder form and mixed with heroin, fentanyl, fentanyl analogues and other illicit opioids.

However, it has been found in samples of cocaine and methamphetamine as well. It is showing up in the drug supply several different ways.

To learn more about how, check out this link from Dr. Nabarun Dasgupta and our partners at the UNC Street Drug Checking Lab.

HOW *does it affect the body?*

Heroin and Fentanyl mixtures containing xylazine are often referred to as "Tranq Dope" because of its powerful tranquilizing effects.

Xylazine affects the body in several ways. As a tranquilizer, xylazine often puts people to sleep for long periods of time after its use. Because it is a Central Nervous System Depressant, xylazine slows breathing, slows heart rate and lowers blood pressure.

Xylazine may also cause serious wounds, ulcers and abscesses on people's bodies. These wounds are painful and can lead to long-term effects such as scarring, infection, and even death. Wounds from xylazine may be more common on the legs and arms of people who inject drugs.

TRANQ DOPE SIDE EFFECTS

Sleeping for very long periods

Slows breathing & heart rate

Skin lesions, ulcers & abcesses

more than 1-IN-4 *drug samples* FROM NC *were positive for* XYLAZINE

WHO *is being affected?*

Since first launching in 2021 for programs in Greensboro and then launching statewide in April 2022 the UNC Drug Analysis Lab and North Carolina Survivors Union, tests have confirmed that 153 of 574 samples from North Carolina that were tested contained xylazine. With roughly 27%, or more than 1 in 4, of samples from North Carolina testing positive for xylazine, contaminated samples have come from 30 counties.

Some of the most recent samples that contained xylazine were from: Guilford, Randolph, Robeson, Surry, Buncombe, Wake and Henderson. Despite having a small sample size that does not include all 100 counties, this data is vital in advancing public health and public safety responses. The illicit drug supply in other counties may or may not contain xylazine.

HARM REDUCTION TIPS
for people who use drugs:

Try not to use alone. If you are alone, **call the 24/7 Never Use Alone Hotline: 1-800-484-3731**

Always carry naloxone and administer in the event of a suspected overdose. Although Naloxone is not an antidote to xylazine itself, xylazine is oftentimes mixed with opioids, which are responsive to naloxone.
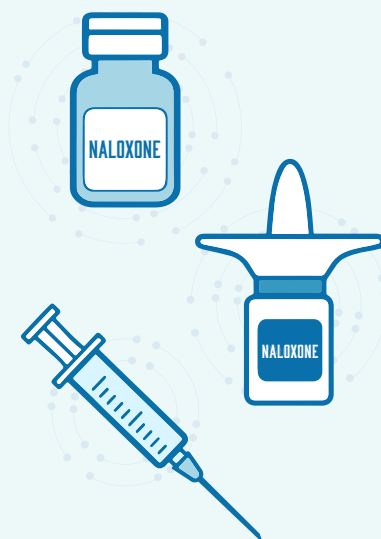
It is safest to not use drugs that contain xylazine, but if you do, don't inject. Other routes of administration such as smoking, snorting or boofing/booty bumping may be safer.

If you can, clean wounds with soap and water (not peroxide, alcohol or dilute bleach). Keep wounds bandaged to aid healing and keep them from drying out. Monitor wounds for signs of infection, such as swelling, heat, putrid discharge or fever.

Test your drugs. Even if you think your drugs do not contain xylazine, get them tested. You may be surprised!

Connect with your local Syringe Services Program or Drug User Union. They can provide you with information on how to protect yourself as well as help get you connected with drug checking resources.

To request a testing kit or to learn more you can use this link: Contact — UNC Street Drug Analysis Lab (streetsafe.supply)

TIPS *for healthcare workers:*

Xylazine injection may cause wounds and ulcers in locations that are not being used for injection. These wounds may appear as "pick marks" but oftentimes worsen and become ulcers and open wounds. Wounds from xylazine may be more common on the legs and arms of people who inject drugs.

According to the FDA: "Signs and symptoms of acute xylazine toxicity may include CNS and respiratory depression, hypotension, bradycardia, hypothermia, miosis, or high blood glucose levels. This toxidrome may appear similar to that of opioids, making it difficult to distinguish between toxicity from opioids versus xylazine." While naloxone will not reverse the effects of xylazone itself, administering naloxone is always important if the person is not breathing as xylazine is often found in combination with opioids.

Furthermore, the FDA states: "Additionally, health care professionals who see patients with severe, necrotic skin ulcerations should consider repeated xylazine exposure as part of the differential diagnosis." It is reported that some medicated dressings and gauzes may help with the healing of wounds caused by xylazine. Providers can begin wound care in an office-based setting or "in the field" prior to culture or test results.

RESOURCES:

- National Harm Reduction Coalition: https://harmreduction.org/issues/xylazine/
- NC Drug Analysis Lab: https://ncxylazine.streamlit.app/ , UNC Street Drug Analysis Lab (streetsafe.supply)
- North Carolina Survivors Union: Poster, Presentation or Paper | Xylazine informational flyer for people who use drugs | ID: kp78gr054 | Carolina Digital Repository (unc.edu)
- Food and Drug Administration Alert: FDA alerts health care professionals of risks to patients exposed to xylazine in illicit drugs | FDA "If you can, clean wounds with soap and water (not peroxide or dilute bleach). Keep wounds bandaged to aid healing and keep them from drying out. Monitor wounds for signs of infection, such as swelling, heat, putrid discharge, fever…"
- NASTAD: PDF-Wound-Care-And-Triage.pdf (nastad.org)
- NASTAD Webinar: Beyond the Alerts: Practical Guidance for Responding to Xylazine: NASTAD Webinar