



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 21, 2023

11:46 AM

CONTACT PERSON

Jeremy Eschliman

Health Director,

888-669-7154

Xylazine

Nebraska is seeing an uptick in cases of xylazine, otherwise known as the zombie drug, within the state. Xylazine, a non-opioid tranquilizer used in veterinary medicine, that, is infiltrating the drug supply and being mixed with other illicit substances—most commonly heroin and fentanyl. Xylazine threatens to worsen outcomes for people who use drugs and complicate the overdose prevention landscape across the country according to federal agencies.

Xylazine is approved for veterinary use in the United States but is not approved by FDA for human medicine. The Philadelphia Department of Public Health reported that more than 90% of opioid samples tested in the city in 2021 tested positive for xylazine. Heroin or fentanyl cut with xylazine is often referred to as "tranq" or "tranq dope." Substances containing xylazine can be ingested orally, snorted, sniffed, or—mostly commonly—injected intravenously.

Leading Concerns

People may not know whether they are exposed to xylazine when using other substances. Xylazine is a central nervous system depressant, causing drowsiness, slowed breathing, reduced heart rate, and hypotension, which may increase the risk of a fatal overdose.

The symptoms of xylazine use and opioid use are similar, making it difficult to differentiate whether an individual has used both substances. Xylazine use has been known to cause skin ulcers, lesions, and abscesses. Individuals who develop a physical dependency on xylazine may develop severe withdrawal symptoms.

In areas where xylazine is detected, raising community awareness of risks associated with xylazine is critical. Xylazine is not an opioid and does not respond to naloxone, xylazine is commonly mixed with opioids. If an overdose is not responsive to naloxone, providers are encouraged to provide supportive measures.

What Steps are Health Agencies Taking?

State and territorial health agencies can take several steps to prevent harm related to xylazine. Agencies can partner with harm reduction organizations, hospitals, substance use treatment providers, High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas, and medicolegal death investigators to understand whether xylazine is present in the local drug supply.

Two Rivers Public Health's regular office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The office can be contacted at 888-669-7154.

ABOUT TWO RIVERS PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Two Rivers Public Health Department engages collaborative partners, community leaders and the public to promote healthy lifestyles, provide preventative education, assure environmental quality, and create more healthy and safe communities for all who live within the district. Follow TRPHD on Facebook and Twitter @2RPHD