

Fentanyl Overdose Safety Information

This handout is meant to provide you with information about a recent increase of fentanyl-related overdose deaths occurring throughout the United States, including Philadelphia, and provide education on how to prevent, recognize, and respond to an opioid overdose.





- Between October 2020- October 2021, it is estimated that 105,000 Americans died of drug overdoses, with 66% being related to fentanyl. **This is more deaths than gun-related or automobile accidents combined.** Veterans are twice as likely as non-Veterans to die from an accidental overdose.
- Between January-March 2022, there has been a steep rise in fentanyl-related overdose deaths for individuals who thought they were ingesting **stimulants (e.g. cocaine or methamphetamine)** and had no knowledge that the substances were laced with or were entirely made of fentanyl.
- Given this rise, please be cautious when taking any non-prescribed drugs in powdered or pill form as they may contain fentanyl. This warning does not apply to medications prescribed for you by licensed providers that is picked up from a legitimate pharmacy.

What is fentanyl?

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid, which is 100x as strong as morphine. 2mg of fentanyl is considered a potentially lethal dose. Individuals who have not built a tolerance to opioids can die from ingesting, inhaling, or even touching a single dose.



What are signs of a fentanyl overdose?

			
Check	Listen	Look	Touch
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sleepy• heavy nodding• deep sleep• hard to wake• vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• slow or shallow breathing (1 breath every 5 seconds)• snoring• raspy, gurgling, or choking sounds	<p>bluish or grayish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• lips• fingernails• skin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• clammy sweaty skin

What can I do to protect myself?



- Talk with your VA providers about getting a prescription for a **naloxone rescue kit** to keep on hand in the event of an overdose.
- Naloxone (also known as **Kloxxado**) is life-saving medication that can temporarily reverse an overdose and provide essential time to seek medical medication. It comes in the form of a nasal spray that can be administered as soon as signs of an overdose are occurring.

Important: if you believe you or someone around you is experiencing an overdose, always call 911 first, then administer naloxone.

Xylazine/“Tranq” Safety Information



This handout is meant to provide you with information about a recent increase of xylazine-related deaths occurring in Philadelphia.

What is Xylazine?

Xylazine also known as “Tranq” is a sedative medication used by Veterinarians for sedating animals.

Why should I be concerned?

There has been a steep increase in reports of xylazine being unknowingly added to stimulants including cocaine in the Philadelphia area. **In 2019, xylazine was related to 1/3rd of all overdoses.** When ingested by humans, xylazine can cause dangerous and life-threatening side effects including:

- Slowed heart rate
- Breathing problems
- Low blood pressure
- Blurred vision
- Problems walking
- High blood sugar
- Unconsciousness
- Skin sores or abscesses which may require amputation of the infected body part
- Death



No amount of xylazine is safe for humans. Because xylazine is a sedative and not an opioid, **it does not respond to naloxone** in the event of an overdose.

What can I do to protect myself?



- Be aware of the side effects of xylazine. If you or someone around you experiences any of the side effects listed above after substance use, seek professional medical attention immediately.
- Talk with your VA providers about getting a prescription for a **naloxone rescue kit** to keep on hand in the event of an overdose.
- If you suspect you or someone around you is experiencing an overdose, call 911 first and then still administer naloxone (aka **Kloxxado**). Even though xylazine is resistant to naloxone, it may still be helpful in the event the substance also contained opioids.
- If skin sores or wounds appear, do not try to self-treat them. Once xylazine is in the body (injected, snorted, or ingested orally) wounds can appear anywhere. Without medical treatment, the infection will continue to worsen and may require amputation or removal of the body part.