

NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Xylazine in the Drug Supply**

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) encourages residents to understand the signs and risks of xylazine use. Xylazine is a drug that is commonly used as an animal tranquilizer, therefore receiving the nickname “tranq”. Though it is used for veterinary practices, this sedative is not approved for human use. Over the last several years xylazine has been increasingly making its way into the illegal drug supply and has been involved with overdose deaths across the country.

Xylazine is commonly used to spike other substances such as heroin, opioids (like fentanyl), and even meth, to achieve a prolonged high. When drugs are combined in this way, they are especially dangerous and can be accidentally or unknowingly taken by someone who is not aware that it has been mixed into the drug supply. Due to its increased prevalence in recent years, the White House has declared xylazine to be an emerging threat, and the DEA has already seized xylazine and fentanyl mixtures in 48 of 50 states, including Nebraska.

**Signs and Risks of Xylazine**

- Sedation (slower brain activity, drowsiness)
- low blood pressure
- lowered heart rate
- difficulty breathing
- withdrawal symptoms
- large blisters or open wounds

Xylazine causes wounds at the sight of injection or around other cuts on the body. These wounds tend to grow wider and increase in severity rather than heal on their own, which results in a high risk of infection. Anyone with these types of wounds should seek medical attention.

Unlike fentanyl, xylazine is a non-opioid sedative. This means that naloxone administration will not reverse the effects of the drug. However, it is always recommended to administer naloxone in the case of a potential drug overdose, since you may not be aware which substances are in someone’s system. Administering naloxone to someone who is not experiencing an opioid overdose will not harm them in any way.

While xylazine has greatly increased as a threat to those who use illegal drugs, the full scope of side effects and health impacts related to xylazine use is still not completely understood. If you suspect someone may be overdosing, call 911 and administer naloxone, if available. For more information visit the CDC’s website on xylazine or contact SWNPHD’s Overdose Awareness program at 308-345-4223.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, or

YouTube, or visit the website at [swhealth.ne.gov](http://swhealth.ne.gov) which contains many helpful resources and additional information to prevent disease, promote and protect health. Call 308-345-4223; one number three locations, McCook, Imperial, and Ogallala.

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