

Emerging Drug Trends: Xylazine and New Synthetic Opioids

PUBLIC BULLETIN

Increase Dangers in Ohio Illicit Market

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Drug mixtures continue to grow more complex across Ohio, containing combinations such as xylazine and / or new synthetic opioids (NSOs) like nitazenes. Some NSOs are more potent than fentanyl and can increase the risk of an overdose. The presence of these compounds is particularly alarming because naloxone is ineffective at reversing overdoses caused by xylazine and may be less effective or require additional doses to reverse NSO overdoses. It remains best practice to administer naloxone when an overdose is suspected.

The preparation of illicit drugs in forms including pills, powders, and liquids may involve mixing in additional substances ranging from stimulants, to depressants, to opioids. There is no way to know which of these categories of drugs are present or whether the substance contains any of them without sophisticated laboratory testing.

The contents of drugs obtained from anyone other than your doctor cannot be identified by appearance alone. NEVER take a pill, powder, or liquid that is not from a licensed healthcare provider.

What is Xylazine?

Xylazine is a veterinary medicine used to sedate animals. It also has pain relieving and muscle relaxing properties. It is not approved for human consumption and can contribute to an overdose in combination with other drugs or by itself.

What is an NSO?

Underground chemists and drug traffickers continually develop new opioids meant to thwart existing law. These are often called new synthetic opioids (NSOs).

Effectiveness of Naloxone and Fentanyl Test Strips

Naloxone, also known by the name brand NARCAN®, is a medication that can reverse an opioid overdose and save lives by blocking the effects of opioids on the brain and quickly restoring breathing. **Naloxone is safe:** if it is given to someone who has not taken opioids it causes no harm. Although naloxone is not effective against xylazine, additional doses may be needed if an NSO is present in the drug. Individuals should be monitored closely to see if additional doses are needed. **Please note: naloxone cannot be self administered.**

More information about where to obtain naloxone is available at naloxone.ohio.gov.

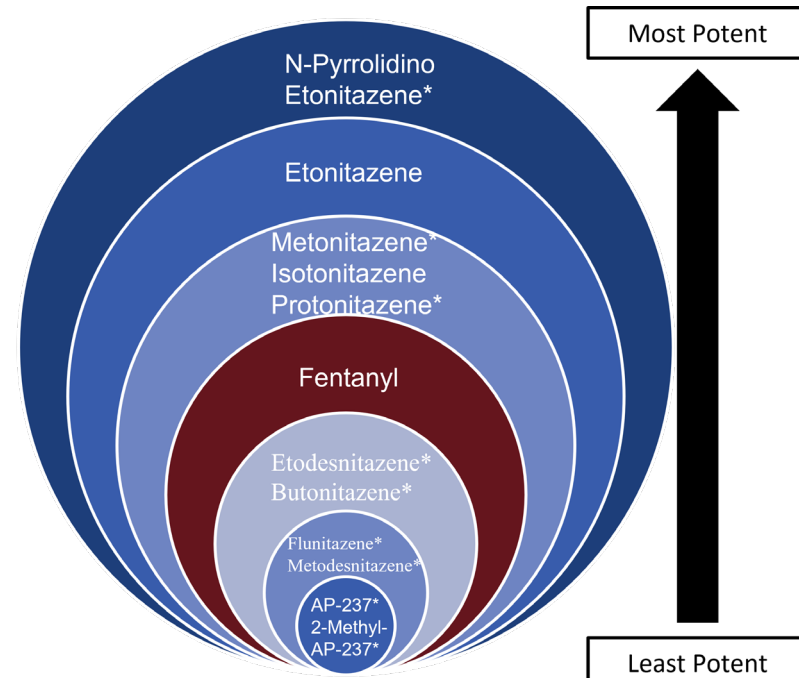
Fentanyl test strips cannot detect new synthetic opioids or xylazine.

What is Being Done

To identify new and emerging NSOs and other dangerous substances, the Ohio Narcotics Intelligence Center (ONIC) works closely with Ohio's drug chemists and toxicologists. Through this partnership the ONIC supports the State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy in adding dangerous substances to Ohio's controlled drug schedule, including seven nitazene drugs in April 2022, AP-237 and 2-Methyl-AP-237, both NSOs, in June 2022, and xylazine on March 28, 2023. ONIC continues to monitor emerging trends across the drug landscape.

Potency Comparison of NSOs Encountered in Ohio 2020 - 2022

All compounds listed are Schedule I or II substances in Ohio.



* Notes NSOs scheduled in Ohio in 2022.

To Report A Drug Tip: 1-833-OHIO-NIC (644-6642) | ONICdrugtips@dps.ohio.gov | [ONIC Online Tip/Lead Form](#) | [ONIC Website](#)

About the Ohio Narcotics Intelligence Center

The Ohio Narcotics Intelligence Center (ONIC) was established in 2019 when Ohio Governor Mike DeWine signed Executive Order 2019-20D. The ONIC operates as part of the Ohio Department of Public Safety in four locations throughout the state. Offices consist of public safety intelligence analysts and forensic computer specialists who assist law enforcement and other public sector agencies with support and information which supports various anti-narcotics related missions.

