



Department of Health
Three Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908-5097
TTY: 711
www.health.ri.gov

ADVISORY NOTICE FROM THE CENTER FOR EMS

#2022.05

To: EMS Service Chiefs, EMS Coordinators, Medical Directors,
Training Officers

From: Jason M. Rhodes, MPA, AEMT-C, Chief

Date: October 25, 2022

Re: Xylazine additive in opioids and other drugs

Xylazine is a non-opioid veterinary muscle relaxant that is found as an adulterant to heroin, fentanyl, and cocaine. It can cause sedation that is not reversed by naloxone.

Xylazine can take effect within minutes and last up to four hours. According to the [Drug Enforcement Administration](#) (DEA), “xylazine decreases the release of norepinephrine and dopamine in the central nervous system resulting in effects such as analgesia, sedation and muscle relaxation.” In addition, xylazine may have other toxic manifestations including blurred vision, disorientation, drowsiness, bradycardia, hypotension, staggering, hyperglycemia, miosis, respiratory depression, coma, and death.

After administering naloxone per [protocols](#) 4.18 Toxicological Emergencies and/or 2.09 Behavioral Emergencies, if respiratory depression persists, provide ventilation via bag-valve-mask or other means, as indicated per protocols 2.08 Respiratory Distress; if patient goes into cardiac arrest, initiate protocol 3.03 Cardiac Arrest.

As always, situation-specific personal protective equipment should be worn when there is a potential for secondary contamination with unknown substances found at the scene of an emergency.

Additional information can be found on the [Center for Disease Control](#) (CDC) and the [National Institutes of Health](#).

