

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH XYLAZINE (‘TRANQ’)?



Xylazine (tranq/sleepdope) is a **VERY STRONG** sedative. It is **NOT** an opioid, but is usually sold mixed with fentanyl. In many places fentanyl contains xylazine and it seems to be in the drug supply more and more in Greene County. It can be brown or white powder, or dyed different colors (purple, pink) and is also found in pills. People have reported a strong smell like gasoline and dry mouth, but it can be hard to know what you have. It's a veterinary medicine, fairly easy to get and mixed in at local level. It's not approved for legal use in humans. People often describe doing a shot and being completely out, unconscious for several hours or even a day, waking up and not knowing what happened.

Why would anyone use it?

It lasts a lot longer than fentanyl, so people may use it so they don't have to use as often. Some people use it to hold them overnight. It also can 'improve' poor quality dope.

Why is it a problem?

It can totally knock people out for several hours. People who usually function just fine on opioids report that xylazine makes them sleepy or unconscious, so they can't go to work or do regular activities. People sometimes pass out on the street or in places that aren't safe, sometimes in a position that blocks breathing or on a leg or arm, cutting off circulation.

It can complicate treatment of overdose. Xylazine is usually mixed with fentanyl. If you overdose on fentanyl, naloxone works to get you breathing again—with xylazine in the mix, you may start breathing again, but remain unconscious. If someone overdoses, **remember to do rescue breathing and keep checking for breathing after you give naloxone.** Once they are breathing, more naloxone won't help and can make people puke. Make sure they are in a position that won't cut off circulation, block their airway, or let them choke on vomit.

Wounds from injecting xylazine can become VERY serious. Wounds can look like burns with black, dead, tissue. Wounds may show up in parts of the body where you haven't injected. They heal very slowly. Snorting xylazine may cause serious sinus infections. Xylazine may also trigger an immune response that keeps blood from flowing normally. If you have a wound, wash the area with soap and warm water, if possible, or just with water if you don't have soap (peroxide and alcohol are too harsh). Xeroform bandages work best, or use a thin coat of Vaseline on a gauze pad to keep the tissue soft. Keeping the wound covered is important for healing these kind of wounds! Leave bandages on for 1-2 days, then wash with warm, soapy water and bandage again. The dead tissue should soften and fall off in a shower or when washing. Repeat until wounds heal. Try to get medical treatment if it's getting worse, not better.

Methadone and suboxone don't necessarily stop withdrawal with a xylazine habit. If you use xylazine daily, you can become physically dependent, and if you start on suboxone or methadone or switch to another opioid supply you may feel a lot of anxiety. You may be withdrawing from xylazine. Clonidine and/or benzos may help with anxiety, but might not be prescribed because of concerns about increased overdose risk. This is something people are still trying to figure out! There is a lot we still don't know!

How do I know if I have it?

It's usually mixed with fentanyl and can look like regular brown or white dope, or it might be dyed different colors (purple, pink). It may have a strong smell like gasoline and cause a dry mouth, but it can be hard to know what you have. If you are waking up after a few hours wondering where your day went, it might be xylazine. If you start suboxone and it isn't keeping you from withdrawal and you think that you've been using xylazine, let the prescriber know that you may need some additional meds for comfort.

Can I test for it?

Yes! Xylazine test strips are available free from the Greene County Department of Health. You can request them at GreeneGovernment.com/HarmReduction

What should I do if I have it?

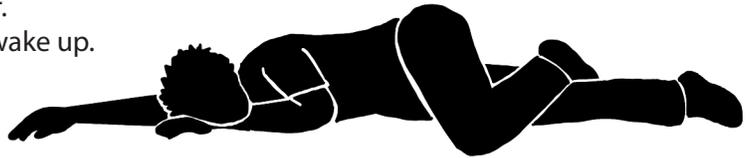
Think about whether you'll be okay if you pass out for a few hours. Try to avoid a public place where you might be hurt, robbed, or alone where no one can find you. If you are lying on your leg or arm for hours and no one finds you, circulation can be cut off.

Overdose

Give naloxone, 1 or 2 doses, to reverse any fentanyl/opioid overdose. Keep checking their breathing, put your ear near their mouth and nose to feel for breath, check for color returning. Breathe for them (rescue breathing) while you wait 3-5 minutes for naloxone to work. Keep rescue breathing for them until they start to breathe on their own or until EMS arrives.

If they are breathing, but still unconscious, more naloxone won't necessarily wake them up. Roll them on their side into the **recovery position** (on their side, with one side's arm and leg straight, the other side's arm and leg bent—this will keep them from choking if they vomit). Keep an eye on them, don't leave them in one position for a long time, and make sure they are not lying in an awkward position that will cut off blood flow or block breathing. Make sure their airways stay clear.

Stay with them until EMS gets there or until they wake up.



Wound Care

- Wash them with soap and water and keep them covered with Xeroform or gauze and a thin coat of vaseline.
- Keep it clean. Try not to touch the wound. Avoid injecting in or around that area.
- You can use a marker to outline any red areas around the wound so you can see if it is getting bigger. If it gets bigger, see a medical professional.
- If you notice any swelling in an arm or leg, try to keep it elevated. Prop it up so it's higher than your heart.
- Watch for wounds turning black, redness and pain spreading, fever, teeth chattering chills, foul odor, bone/tendons showing, chunks of tissue falling. If you see any of these signs it's URGENT that you get medical attention to treat wound. You may need antibiotics or maybe even surgery.

This sounds like scary stuff!

There is not a lot of research on xylazine use, because it's not used medically in humans, so we don't know a lot! Let us know if you are learning or figuring out ways to tell that you have xylazine, or ways to deal with the problems it can cause. We always learn from you!



Go to GreeneGovernment.com/HarmReduction to request free Xylazine Test Strips and other harm reduction supplies, like naloxone and Fentanyl Test Strips. Greene County Public Health also offers treatment with Buprenorphine (Suboxone/Sublocade) and can connect you to other Harm Reduction Services.