

June 6, 2023

Public Health Alert – Xylazine Detected

Situation

Northwestern Health Unit has been notified that Xylazine has been found locally in the unregulated drug supply.

Xylazine is not approved for human use and is typically used by veterinarians for pain relief, sedation, and muscle relaxation of large animals (referred to as horse tranquilizer).

Issue

Xylazine can lead to symptoms similar to an opioid overdose, and it can increase risk and severity of overdose when taken with opioids, benzodiazepines or alcohol.

Xylazine **DOES NOT** respond to naloxone administration. Risk of acute toxicity increases with the concurrent use of other depressants such as alcohol and/or opioids

Prevention and harm reduction opportunities

Messaging for patients:

- Don't use alone. Have someone with you, on the phone, or download and use the [Lifeguard App](#).
- If using with a friend, do not use at the same time. Make sure the other person is OK before you use.
- Carry naloxone and know how to use it – although not effective on xylazine, it is effective on opioids.
- Call 911 with a suspected overdose. The [Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act](#) provides some legal protection to the person calling.
- Counsel on the range of treatment options for opioid use disorder including opioid agonist treatments.

Resources

- [Government of Canada: The Emergence of Xylazine in Canada](#)
- [Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction – Xylazine](#)
- [Toward the Heart – Xylazine](#)

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