

Overdoses from Non-Opioid Sedatives



At this time, there are some street drugs being **mixed with strong animal sedatives** that can make overdoses harder to treat. They include:

Xylazine

A strong animal sedative (used mostly in horses) that slows down the body. It is **not meant for people**, but it is sometimes mixed in street drugs.

Medetomidine

Another animal sedative, and like xylazine, it can slow the heart and breathing. **It is not safe for humans**, but may be found in illegal drugs.



Why is this concerning?

- ! **These sedatives are not opioids**, so naloxone (Narcan) **won't reverse** their effects.
- ! They are **being found in illegal opioids** — almost always with fentanyl.

Overdose Signs

- Not breathing well
- Lips or fingertips turning blue or gray
- Won't wake up or respond
- Very limp body or choking sounds

Overdose Action Steps

- 1** Focus on **helping the person breathe** — not just waking them up. This is the most important step.
- 2** **Use naloxone** (Narcan) if you think someone has overdosed on opioids like fentanyl or heroin and they aren't breathing well or won't wake up.
- 3** Watch their breathing and blood pressure closely. Naloxone only reverses opioid effects— it **does not work on sedatives**.
- 4** If the person remains unconscious after administering Naloxone, they will need **immediate medical attention**, potentially due to sedatives in their system.
- 5** Doctors may need to treat **both opioid withdrawal and sedative withdrawal** with safe, proven medications (see **backside for guidance after an overdose**).

After an Overdose

Naloxone helps with opioids like fentanyl, but not with sedatives like xylazine or medetomidine. This is why it is important the person receives **immediate medical attention**.



Stopping sedatives suddenly can cause serious symptoms like:

- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Restlessness
- High blood pressure

Doctors need to treat **both opioid and sedative withdrawal at the same time**.

Using the right medications can make withdrawal **safer and more comfortable**.

How to Reduce Harm



Never use alone

Always have someone nearby who can help in an emergency.



Test your drugs

Use fentanyl and xylazine test strips if available.



Carry naloxone (Narcan)

It can save a life in an opioid overdose.



Start low and go slow

Use a small amount first to check strength.



Seek medical care for wounds

If left untreated, wounds from non-opioid sedatives can lead to amputation or become life-threatening.

Additional Information

- [Minnesota Drug Overdose and Substance Use Surveillance Activity \(MNDOSA\)](https://health.state.mn.us/communities/injury/data/mndosa.html) (health.state.mn.us/communities/injury/data/mndosa.html)
- [Minnesota Regional Poison Center](https://mnpoison.org) (mnpoison.org)
- [Health Advisory: Sedative Associated Overdoses, July 2025](https://health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/han/2025/jul29overdose.pdf) (health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/han/2025/jul29overdose.pdf)
- [AP: Animal sedative medetomidine is showing up in the US illegal drug supply, CDC says](https://apnews.com) (Search using article name at apnews.com)

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