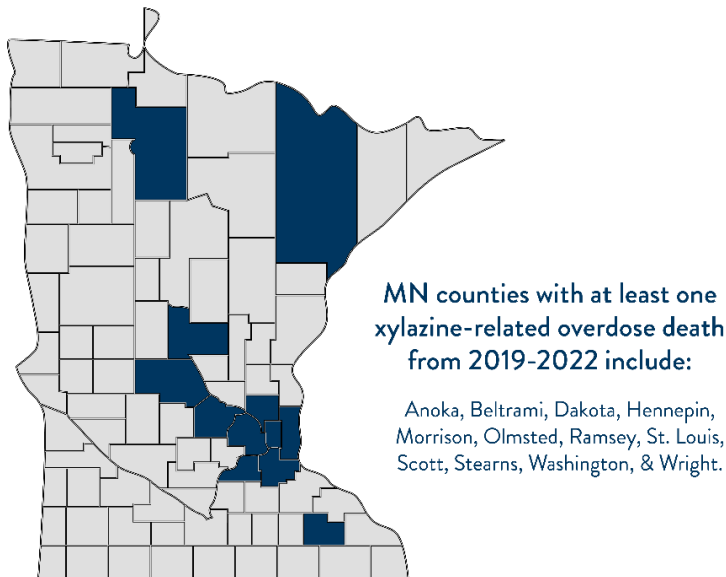


Xylazine in Minnesota

Xylazine, also called “Tranq” or “Tranq Dope,” is a powerful veterinary sedative (not an opioid) increasingly found mixed with fentanyl in the illicit drug supply. **Using xylazine in combination with opioids like fentanyl increases risk of overdose and death.** Xylazine also causes life-threatening skin ulcers, abscesses, and wounds that can lead to infection and amputation.

MN Counties Reporting Xylazine-Related Overdose Deaths, 2019-2022



*Data from 2022 is preliminary and subject to change.

Xylazine-involved overdose deaths in Minnesota are relatively low compared to some states, but they are increasing at an alarming rate.

The first known xylazine-involved overdose death in Minnesota occurred in 2019. Since then, the number of xylazine-involved deaths has increased every year.

In 2019, there were four overdose deaths involving xylazine, followed by eight in 2020 and 24 in 2021.

Preliminary 2022 data shows there were 34 xylazine-involved deaths across the state.

Minnesota counties with at least

one xylazine-related death from 2019-2022 include: Anoka, Beltrami, Dakota, Hennepin, Morrison, Olmsted, Ramsey, St. Louis, Scott, Stearns, Washington, and Wright.

In total, there were **70** reported xylazine-related overdose deaths in MN from 2019-2022. Toxicology testing shows that fentanyl was also present in 100% of xylazine-related deaths.

National Response to Xylazine

The full national scope of overdose deaths involving xylazine is not known, but research indicates that xylazine first entered the drug supply in the Northeast before spreading across the United States, where it has now been found in 48 states.

In April 2023, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy designated the combination of xylazine and fentanyl in the illicit drug supply as an emerging threat to the nation. This announcement included the creation of a forthcoming “whole government plan” intended to increase xylazine testing, improve data systems, advance rapid research, develop treatment and care protocols, and reduce the illicit supply of xylazine nationwide.

Harm Reduction: Protect Yourself from Xylazine

Syringe service programs (SSP) can help you follow all the steps listed below. MDH's [SSP calendar](#) hosts a variety of SSP partners from across the state. Refer to the calendar for SSP scheduled services (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/syringe/calendar.html>).

Xylazine prolongs the fast-acting effects of fentanyl, which gives people who use it more time to secure another dose before withdrawal symptoms begin. However, the risks that come with xylazine are profound, and anyone who uses opioids, or any illicit substances must take care to protect themselves with the following steps:



Always administer naloxone.

Although xylazine does not respond directly to naloxone because it is not an opioid, the opioids that xylazine is combined with will respond to naloxone. In the event of a suspected overdose, administer naloxone every time, no matter what. To find some, use [the MN Naloxone Finder \(https://knowthedangers.com/naloxone-finder/\)](https://knowthedangers.com/naloxone-finder/).



Test your drugs.

Fentanyl test strips can detect fentanyl in your supply before you take it. They are available online or from harm reduction organizations like [the Steve Rummler HOPE Network \(https://steверummlerhopenetwork.org/what-we-do/overdose-prevention/fentanyl-test-strips/\)](https://steверummlerhopenetwork.org/what-we-do/overdose-prevention/fentanyl-test-strips/). **Xylazine test strips** have recently become available online, but their effectiveness and availability in Minnesota are not yet confirmed.



Ask yourself: “Was that tranq?”

Many people who use xylazine are likely not aware they are taking it, but some may deliberately use it to extend an opioid high. Unlike fentanyl alone, xylazine often causes severe memory loss and unconsciousness for long periods of time. While people who regularly use opioids are often able to work or perform essential day-to-day tasks, the same is not true about xylazine, which can make it far more difficult to function.



Don't use drugs alone.

The extreme sedative power of xylazine significantly increases the chance that someone under its influence will lose consciousness for long periods. If this happens to someone in an unsafe environment, they may be abused, robbed, or taken advantage of in other ways. Whenever possible, never use alone or in the presence of people you do not trust. Always have a safety plan and ensure someone near you is ready to use naloxone. If you do use alone, call the [“Never Use Alone” 24 hour hot line \(Never Use Alone Inc. – 800-484-3731\)](#).



Take care of your wounds.

Xylazine use dramatically increases the risk of developing serious wounds, both at injection sites and elsewhere on and inside the body. What may start out as track marks can turn into life-threatening wounds that result in amputations, infections, or death. Do not wait to seek medical attention for wounds or track marks. Every day counts.



Watch out for withdrawal.

Xylazine withdrawal is more intense than opioid withdrawal, and there are far fewer options available to treat it. Symptoms of withdrawal from xylazine include extreme anxiety that can last for months. Opioid withdrawal symptoms can be treated with medications like methadone and buprenorphine, but xylazine withdrawal symptoms cannot be treated with these medications.

References

Biden-Harris Administration Designates Fentanyl Combined with Xylazine as an Emerging Threat to the United States:

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[\(https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35442125/\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35442125/)

DEA: The Growing Threat of Xylazine and its Mixture with Illicit Drugs:

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05/16/2023

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