

# XYLAZINE BASICS:

## What you need to know

### WHAT IS XYLAZINE?

- Also known as tranq or tranq-dope, is a non-opioid, unscheduled veterinary tranquilizer that is used as an additive in the illicit drug supply. In veterinary medicine, xylazine is used as a sedative, analgesic (pain reliever), and muscle relaxant for animals.
- Similar properties to the prescription-only medication clonidine, which lowers blood pressure, heart rate and can decrease anxiety.
- Not approved for use in humans.
- Can be ingested orally, inhaled/sniffed, smoked, or injected.
- Enhances the sedative effect of other substances.
- Most notably added to heroin and fentanyl-containing products, though it has also been reported in other drugs, including cocaine.
- Many people use xylazine inadvertently or unknowingly because it is added to other drugs.

### XYLAZINE DOES NOT RESPOND TO NALOXONE

May remain sedated even after administration of naloxone. Assess respiratory status and look for the return of breathing after naloxone administration. A person who used both an opioid and xylazine may start breathing again but not fully regain consciousness. If a person is breathing but remains sedated, place the person in a recovery position and await further help (paramedics). Do not administer more doses of naloxone once breathing has returned.

### HARM REDUCTION INTERVENTIONS

- Harm reduction is an approach to care that meets people where they are, uses patient-centered goals as a starting place for action, and works to reduce harm related to substance use and other health behaviors.
  - Essential for supporting people who are using xylazine.
- Naloxone remains an essential tool for responding to suspected overdoses, regardless of whether the person has also used xylazine.
  - Assess responsiveness and signs of respiratory distress—gurgling/gasping, blue or gray tinged lips or skin, or absence of breathing—and respond accordingly.
- As with other substances, people taking drugs containing xylazine should use with a companion. This helps prevent overdose but also theft and assault that can occur while a person is sedated.
- Advise people to use in a position that will not cause injury if they are sedated for a prolonged period.
  - Such as in a place where they could fall if sedated (e.g., a chair with no arms or the top step of a stoop).
- The use of safe supplies like clean syringes and other equipment, as well as a good injection technique, is vital for preventing infectious disease transmission and other infections or abscesses.
- Monitor skin for signs of wounds or breakdown and seek help immediately if wounds start to develop.
  - Cover wounds with clean dressing; do not leave a wound open to air or rely on a shirt sleeve for coverage.
- Use fentanyl and xylazine test strips where available.