



Medi-Cal Rx

# Risks to Patients Exposed to Xylazine in Illicit Drugs

January 27, 2023

On November 8, 2022, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a communication regarding increasing reports of serious side effects from individuals exposed to fentanyl, heroin, and other illicit drugs contaminated with xylazine.

Xylazine is used in animals as a sedative and pain reliever. It is not safe for use in humans, and may result in serious or life-threatening side effects similar to those seen with opioid use. It may be difficult to distinguish opioid use from xylazine exposure. It is unknown if the effects of xylazine are reversible with naloxone, or if the reversal agents used for xylazine in veterinary medicine are safe or effective in humans. Xylazine is not detectable by routine toxicology screens.

Health care professionals should continue to administer naloxone for opioid overdoses and consider xylazine exposure if patients are not responding to naloxone or when there are signs or symptoms of xylazine exposure (e.g., severe, necrotic skin ulcerations). Health care professionals should provide appropriate supportive measures to patients who do not respond to naloxone.

To read the full safety announcement, refer to the article ["FDA alerts health care professionals of risks to patients exposed to xylazine in illicit drugs"](#) found on the [Drug Safety and Availability](#) page of the FDA website.