



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Risk of Xylazine in Opioid Use

East Wenatchee, WA – Health agencies across the United States are reporting an increase of Xylazine detected in overdose deaths and in seized illicit drug supplies. Regional Local Health Jurisdictions (LHJs) warn the general public about Xylazine risk in opioid use.

Xylazine, also known as *tranq*, *tranq dope*, *sleep-cut* and *zombie drug*, is a synthetic tranquilizer approved by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) for use in veterinary medicine. Xylazine causes sedation and is often mixed with fentanyl and other illicit drugs to prolong or strengthen the high or euphoric effect of those drugs. **Individuals who overdose on opioids mixed with xylazine cannot be revived with naloxone, an emergency treatment that helps reverse an overdose from opioids.** Because there is no medical treatment that counteracts a Xylazine overdose, deaths associated with Xylazine are on the rise. Xylazine also causes tissue necrosis (premature cell death) or rotting skin when injected, later resulting in the need for life-saving amputation of fingers, arms and legs.

LHJs are actively monitoring local drug overdose reports with regional and state epidemiologists, to follow trends and the anticipated rise in overdose deaths that will come as Xylazine spreads through ongoing drug supplies. Currently, there are few available tests to determine if an individual has been exposed to Xylazine or if a drug was laced with Xylazine. As with past trends in drug overdoses, our only way of detecting the appearance of a new drug is a change in the pattern of overdoses and deaths.

As we anticipate an increase in Xylazine-containing drugs throughout North Central Washington, the general public should spread awareness of the severity of Xylazine and the importance of avoiding the use of illicit drugs and seeking care for substance use disorders. Individuals experiencing any substance use disorder should be aware that street drugs will likely contain Xylazine if they do not already. Treatment for opioid use disorder and recovery services offered throughout North Central Washington are available and are safer alternatives than using drugs that might be laced with Xylazine.

The epidemic of substance use disorders are becoming more complex and more deadly. Our friends, family members, neighbors and community members are likely to be affected and may be in need of help for themselves or their loved ones. The best public health interventions are those focused on prevention of disease and promotion of health. LHJs recognize that substance use disorders often result from injury, dependence on well-intentioned prescription pain medications, behavioral health needs and difficulty in accessing resources for wellness and healthy living. LHJs will continue to participate in, and encourage community collaboration in making North Central Washington a healthy and thriving place to live.

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