

Emerging Drug Supply Changes

Thurston County Opioid Response Task Force

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Recent Trends

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- Consistent increase in overdoses, both fatal and non-fatal
 - Fentanyl
 - Methamphetamine
- Decrease in heroin use & increase in fentanyl use
 - Primarily due to availability & cost
- Continued polysubstance use

Recent Trends Within Youth Populations

- Misuse of prescription medication
 - Stimulants (Adderall, Ritalin, etc.)
 - Benzodiazepines (Xanax, Klonopin, etc.)
 - Opioids (Oxycontin, Vicodin, etc.)
- Misuse of over-the-counter medication
 - Diphenhydramine (Benadryl)
 - Doxylamine (Sleep aid)
 - DXM (Robitussin) & other cold medicine
- Alcohol use
- Increased fentanyl use

Unregulated Drug Supply

Unregulated Drug Supply

- Illegal substances and/or substances not regulated by the FDA
- Unknown ingredients & additives
 - May be exposed to a substance unknowingly
 - Some additives & fillers can cause increased risk of adverse reactions
- Variable potency
 - Difficult/impossible to know what dose is being taken
 - Not consistent across entire batch
 - Pills especially may vary from one to another

Mitigating an Unregulated Supply

- Encouragement of harm reduction practices
 - Not using alone
 - Starting slow with small doses
- Test strips
 - Fentanyl
 - Benzodiazepines
 - Xylazine
- Comprehensive drug checking
 - On-site at point of care
 - Mail-based

Emerging Trends

Novel/“Designer” Benzodiazepines

- Most benzodiazepines confiscated by law enforcement are illicit/counterfeit rather than prescription
 - Have rapidly replaced prescription benzodiazepines in the market
- Often vary in strength & can be 2-3x the strength of prescription benzodiazepines
- Pose an increased risk of adverse effect when mixed with other drugs, especially opioids or drugs which cause respiratory depression

Xylazine

- Non-opioid tranquilizer that is FDA approved for animals
 - Not approved for human use
- Most commonly mixed into fentanyl
 - Extends the effects of fentanyl, which can delay a person feeling sick from withdrawal
- Causes drowsiness, slowed breathing, & decreased blood pressure
 - Effects can look similar to an opioid overdose
 - Naloxone does not work, as it is not an opioid

Wounds from Xylazine Use

- Often causes skin ulcers, abscesses, & necrosis
- Wounds can appear anywhere & are not limited to an injection site
- Can take months to years to heal
 - Often require medical intervention



(left photo) – <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9482722/>

(right photo) – <https://shmabstracts.org/abstract/a-case-of-skin-necrosis-caused-by-intravenous-xylazine-abuse/>

Questions?