

# Tranq (AKA Xylazine): A Field Guide

## TRANQ: What is it?

### The Basics

- First human use was in Puerto Rico in the early 2000s.
- Began to show up in the Philadelphia supply in 2006.
  - In 2021 & 2022, Tranq was detected in over 90% of dope.
- Xylazine is an alpha-2-adrenergic agonist.
  - This can cause dropped blood pressure and heart rate.
- Xylazine also causes vasoconstriction which means the blood vessels in your body become narrower.
  - This slows the blood flow and affects healing time for wounds.
- Xylazine is an animal tranquilizer not approved for humans.
- Xylazine is not an opioid and will not respond to Naloxone/Narcan.
  - However, because Xylazine and fentanyl are typically found together, it is still important to administer Naloxone/Narcan.

### Why Does It Matter?

1. Skin and soft tissues infections
2. Complicated overdose response and appearance
3. Withdrawal management
4. Safety of individuals using

**#1: Tranq causes skin and soft tissue infections:** no matter the route of administration, individuals can experience tranq wounds.

- Smoking: coughing up black stuff. Wounds can also appear on other parts of the body.
- Boofing: Rectal ulcerations. Wounds can also appear on other parts of the body.
- Snorting: Wounds inside the nose and sinuses. Wounds can also appear on other parts of the body.
- Injecting: Unlike typical abscesses, the wound can occur anywhere on the body and does not need to be near the injection site.

These wounds most closely resemble necrotizing fasciitis.

Anecdotally, there has been an increase in amputations due to tranq wounds.

Depending upon the progression of the wound(s), healing may take a very long time to heal and require regular wound care and maintenance.

There is no research available to discuss what happens internally via different routes of administration.

***WARNING!! GRAPHIC IMAGE ON NEXT SLIDE!!***

# Tranq (AKA Xylazine): A Field Guide



## Tranq Wound Care 101

At this time, there is no solid consensus as to why these wounds are occurring or what defines best practice for these wounds.

There is simply not enough research.

In addition to universal wound care tips, the information provided here is based on our own experiences providing wound care to individuals using substances cut with Xylazine.

### Step By Step

1. Wash or sanitize hands, or put on clean disposable gloves; try to lay out a clean workspace using a disposable chuck.
2. Gently wash the wound and surrounding area with: water, saline, or soap and water.
3. Protect the healthy surrounding skin with ointment (A&D or something similar) or a no-sting barrier film.
4. Apply an ointment (like Neosporin, Medihoney, or Hexagon) to a non-stick gauze or Adaptic/Xeroform. Place this directly on the wound.
5. If you applied a dressing like Adaptic or Xeroform, place a non-stick gauze pad on top of that dressing.
6. If it is draining a lot, top that dressing with an ABD Pad (if that's not an option you can also use a Maxi Pad).
7. Wrap with roll gauze and tape.
8. It's always an option to cover these dressings with athletic wrap or an ACE bandage.

# Tranq (AKA Xylazine): A Field Guide

## #2: Impact on overdoses

- If a person does overdose and naloxone is needed:
  - It is important to closely monitor to see when they resume breathing on their own.
  - Due to the sedating effect of Xylazine, a person may begin breathing again but not be awake or alert.
- Complicated overdose response and appearance
  - Individual may be unresponsive but still breathing
    - Check in on people
  - It is important to monitor breathing and, if possible, blood oxygen level via a pulse oximeter ("pulse ox")

**#3: Withdrawal Management:** Withdrawal symptoms are different from opioids and require different treatment.

- Individuals can differentiate symptoms of Xylazine withdrawal from opiate withdrawal when being properly treated with medication for OUD with methadone or suboxone.
- Traditional opioid withdrawal management will not be effective for tranq withdrawal.
- Xylazine withdrawal symptoms are similar to benzo withdrawal.
  - Agitation
  - Irritability
  - Anxiety
  - Insomnia
  - Risk of seizure
- Recommended medications for tranq withdrawal:
  - Benzodiazepines, Ketamine, Clonidine

## #4: Safety of People Who Use Drugs

- Tranq causes extreme sedation which creates a vulnerable situation for the user.
  - In some instances an individual may experience a blackout.
- Because of extreme sedation, individuals are at an increased risk of:
  - Sexual assault
  - Robbery