

Xylazine in Cuyahoga County, Ohio



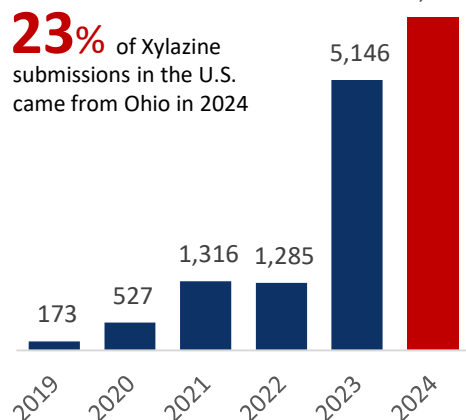
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Widespread, Harmful, and Rising: Xylazine's Growing Public Health Impact

Fig 1. Ohio Law Enforcement Xylazine Seizures Reported to DEA NFLIS-Drug, by Year¹



Background: Commonly known as “tranq” or “tranq dope” (when mixed with fentanyl), **xylazine** is a non-opioid veterinary sedative and central nervous system depressant not approved for human use.² It is not federally controlled but classified as a Schedule III controlled substance in Ohio.³ Sold online for as little as \$6–\$20 per kilogram, xylazine has been introduced into the drug supply by both Mexican and Ohio-based drug trafficking organizations, and counterfeit pills in Ohio have tested positive for xylazine.^{4,5}

Often mixed with fentanyl, xylazine can be injected, snorted, or inhaled.² Xylazine's effects (see list on left) are especially dangerous when combined with opioids, alcohol, or benzodiazepines.² While naloxone does not reverse xylazine, it is still recommended in overdoses due to frequent fentanyl involvement.⁵ Some individuals use xylazine intentionally to extend fentanyl's effects; others are unknowingly exposed through contaminated or adulterated drugs.²

Xylazine Effects

- Drowsiness
- Sedation
- Slowed breathing
- Low heart rate
- Slow brain activity
- Relaxation
- Disorientation

Key Data Takeaways for Cuyahoga County

Widespread in Syringes. Xylazine was the second most common drug detected in syringes tested in Cuyahoga County from August to December 2024. It appeared in 47% (136 of 290) samples and co-occurred with fentanyl in 91% (124 of 136) of those cases.⁶

Overdose Deaths. In 2024 there were 34 xylazine-related deaths in Cuyahoga County, up from 26 in 2023. All 34 deaths in 2024 also involved fentanyl. Xylazine was first detected in the county in 2020, with a reported 5 deaths that year.⁷

Drug Seizure Lab Findings. Cuyahoga County reported 791 xylazine-positive seizures in 2024, down from 1,036 in 2023. Xylazine ranked as the 5th most common drug both years and accounted for 12.5% of Ohio's xylazine seizures in 2024.

Health Risks



Repeated use of xylazine can lead to severe skin and soft tissue wounds that are painful, slow to heal, and prone to infection. These wounds can occur even without injection, such as from smoking or snorting the drug, and in some cases may progress to tissue death requiring excision or amputation. Additional complications include chronic wound care needs, risk of bacterial infections like infective endocarditis, and increased vulnerability to bloodborne viruses such as HIV and hepatitis C, particularly when syringes are shared.²

Data Sources: 1. [NFLIS-DQS](#) (analysis by Begun Center); 2. [NIDA Xylazine](#); 3. [Ohio Executive Order](#); 4. [ONIC Strategic Report](#); 5. [DEA Joint Intelligence Report](#); 6. [Cuyahoga County's Pilot Drug Checking Program](#) - Test results of 290 syringes from Aug to Dec 2024; 7. Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office; 8. Cuyahoga County Regional Forensics Science Lab. **Funding Acknowledgement:** This data brief was supported by grant #15PBJA-22-GG-04436-COAP awarded to the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board of Cuyahoga County and funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Bureau of Justice Assistance or the ADAMHS Board.

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