

# What is xylazine?

[www.crew.scot](http://www.crew.scot)



# XYLAZINE

**Pronounced: zai-lah-zeen**

- Xylazine has been recently detected in the UK and Scottish drug market. It is as a non-opioid animal sedative and muscle relaxant **(not intended for human use)**. It is most often sold as or found in other drugs.
- Xylazine has been found in powders (appearing brown, pink or colourless), contaminated heroin, and vape liquid.
- **People who have taken xylazine report:** feeling generally unwell, nausea or vomiting, and have reported that xylazine doesn't smell like heroin and has more of a chemical or even 'fishy' smell.
- While xylazine was first detected in Scotland in 2020, its current presence has emerged suddenly, and **the number of detections continue to increase** in other drugs.



- **Effects include** sedation, loss of coordination, difficulty breathing, low blood pressure and slowed heart rate.
- Xylazine may slow down heart rate and breathing, **and can be potentially life threatening if mixed** with other 'downer' type drugs, such as alcohol, opioids, benzodiazepines (Valium, Xanax, etizolam), GHB and ketamine.
- Xylazine is being sold as or found in some of these drugs, so **if you feel unwell, stay with someone and seek help.**
- The amount of xylazine type drugs found in powders **varies** so it would be almost impossible to judge an accurate dose.

- **Xylazine is not an opioid, so naloxone is not effective in reversing its effects.**
- **Naloxone will remain effective against opioids which may have been consumed with the xylazine.** If in doubt administer naloxone, but always call 999 as treating an overdose that involves xylazine requires medical care in a hospital setting.
- **Test your drugs** - this allows you to be more aware of unexpected contents:  
**[www.crew.scot/how-do-i-test-my-drugs](http://www.crew.scot/how-do-i-test-my-drugs)**
- **Start with a test dose.**
- **If possible, try not to take your drugs alone, and encourage your mates not to take them alone either. Stay with a group of people you trust and look out for each other, staying aware of the signs of an overdose.**

- Xylazine has been **linked to skin wounds**, lesions and ulcers that can become **infected**, increasing the risk of Blood-borne Viruses (BBVs) and potentially leading to serious infections, such as sepsis.
- Use clean injecting equipment provided by an **Injecting Equipment Provider (IEP)**<sup>1</sup> to prevent the spread of infections or Blood-Borne Viruses (BBVs).
- Ensure any wounds or ulcerations that you may have are **treated properly**. Your Injecting Equipment Provider can either provide this care or signpost you to the appropriate service.
- If you are **concerned**, try to speak to a pharmacist, GP or, if you inject drugs, a professional at an Injecting Equipment Provider (IEP) for support.



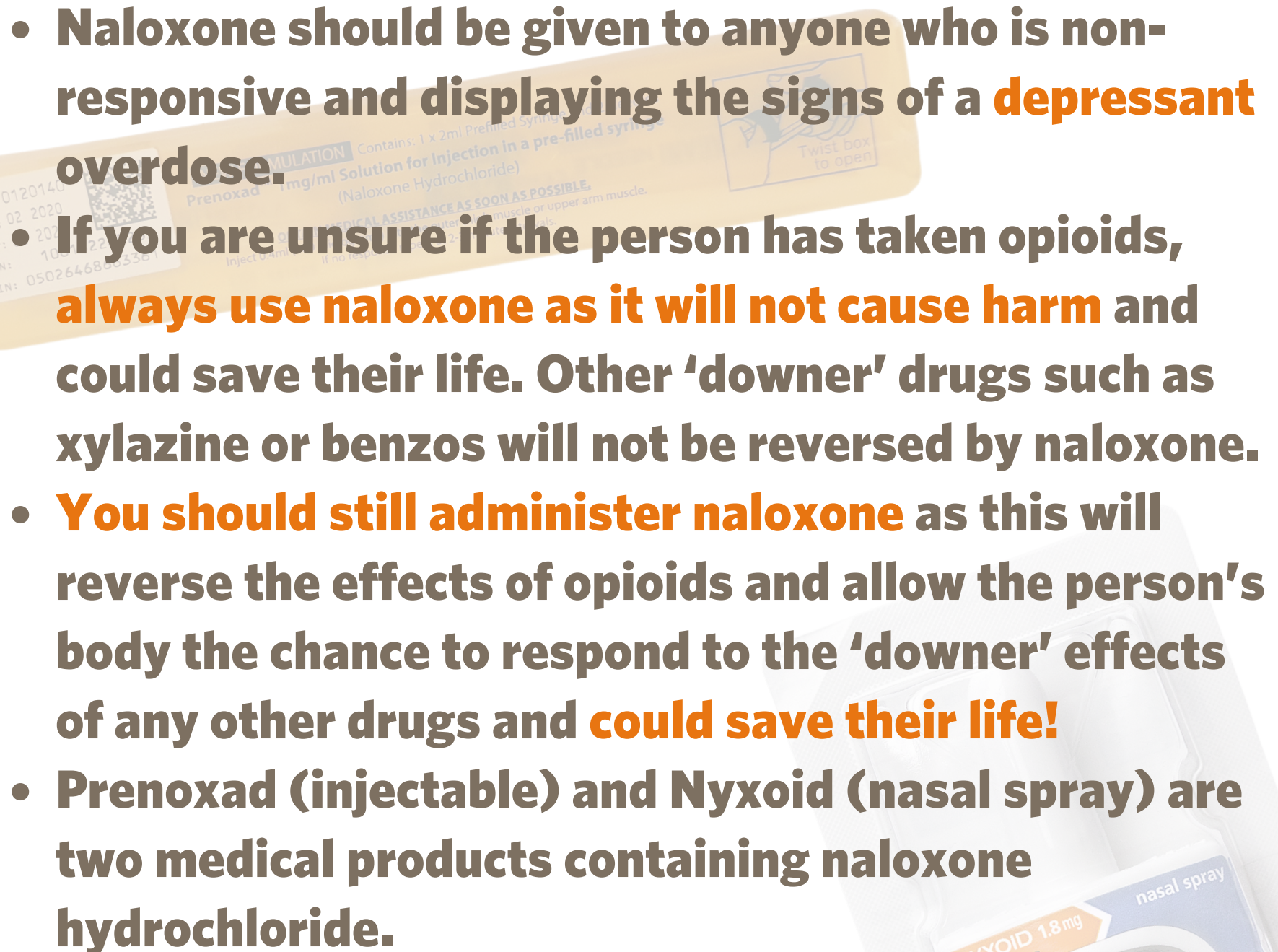
**Familiarise yourself with the signs of a depressant overdose so that you feel confident about what to do to help.**

## **Signs of an overdose**

- **Confusion**
- **Unconsciousness – won't wake with a shout or a shake**
- **Severe nausea and vomiting**
- **Fitting**
- **Difficulty breathing**
- **Snoring/raspy breathing**
- **Blue/pale tingeing of knees, hands and lips (or a gray appearance in people with darker skin tones)**
- **Slow or erratic pulse (heartbeat)**
- **Pale, cold and clammy skin**
- **If synthetic opioids are present, they may cause seizure-like symptoms (fits/muscle spasm/rigid or tight muscles/tightness in the chest that makes breathing difficult)**



# Administering Naloxone

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- Naloxone should be given to anyone who is non-responsive and displaying the signs of a **depressant overdose**.
  - If you are unsure if the person has taken opioids, **always use naloxone as it will not cause harm** and could save their life. Other 'downer' drugs such as xylazine or benzos will not be reversed by naloxone.
  - **You should still administer naloxone** as this will reverse the effects of opioids and allow the person's body the chance to respond to the 'downer' effects of any other drugs and **could save their life!**
  - Prenoxad (injectable) and Nyxoid (nasal spray) are two medical products containing naloxone hydrochloride.

**In Scotland the provision of naloxone is FREE and anyone aged 14 and over can grab a naloxone kit from the Crew Drop-in**  
**[www.crew.scot/what-we-do/get-naloxone](http://www.crew.scot/what-we-do/get-naloxone)**



## In an emergency

- Always **call 999** in an emergency.
- **If the person stops breathing**, perform CPR (chest compressions and rescue breaths) where possible.
- If the person is breathing, put them into the **recovery position** (as shown on next page).
- Injectable **naloxone** should be administered into the muscle at the top of the thigh.
- It can also be administered into the top part of the arm between the elbow and shoulder where vaccines are usually administered.
- If someone has not responded to the first dose of injectable naloxone, then additional doses can be administered at **two-minute** intervals until they begin to respond or an ambulance arrives.



# THE RECOVERY POSITION

**1.** Put the hand closest to you by the head (as if they were waving).

**2.** Put the arm furthest away from you across the chest, so that the back of the hand rests against the cheek.

**3.** Hold the hand and lift up the knee furthest away from you, then turn them on their side by pushing down on their knee.

**4.** Open their airway by gently tilting their head back and lifting their chin, and check that nothing is blocking their airway.





**[www.sfad.org.uk](http://www.sfad.org.uk)**

Family support, bereavement support, telephone and webchat, postal naloxone.

Helpline: **08080 101011**



**[www.crew.scot](http://www.crew.scot)**

Face to face and digital Drop-in, information, in person naloxone provision.



**ScottishDrugServices**  
Directory

**[www.scottishdrugservices.com](http://www.scottishdrugservices.com)**

Online directory contact information and details for over 200 agencies in Scotland who can help with drug treatment and care.



**Scottish**  
**Needle Exchange**  
Directory

**[www.needleexchange.scot](http://www.needleexchange.scot)**

The Needle Exchange Directory provides a list of all the services that provide injecting equipment in Scotland.



**SDF**  
Scottish Drugs  
Forum

**[www.sdf.org.uk](http://www.sdf.org.uk)**

Scotland's national membership organisation offering training, resources and policy work.

# withyou

**EXCHANGE  
SUPPLIES**  
MAKING INJECTING SAFER

**WEDI  
NOS**

**Release**  
Drugs, The Law & Your Rights

  
**EuroNPUD**  
European Network of People who Use Drugs

**[www.wearewithyou.org.uk](http://www.wearewithyou.org.uk)**

Confidential, online and face to face support services for people in England and Scotland.

**[www.exchangesupplies.org](http://www.exchangesupplies.org)**

A social enterprise working to improve the harm reduction response to drug use by developing products and information for injecting drug users, drug services, and needle exchanges.

**[www.wedinos.org](http://www.wedinos.org)**

Welsh Emerging Drugs and Identification of Novel Substances - anonymous and free postal drug testing service.

**[www.release.org.uk](http://www.release.org.uk)**

Drugs, the law and your rights.

Free legal advice helpline: **0207 324 2989**

**[www.euronpud.net](http://www.euronpud.net)**

European Network of People Who Use Drugs works with all drug user groups in Europe.



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