



Medetomidine Drug Supply Alert

Medetomidine (MEH-deh-TOH-mih-deen)

Medetomidine is a sedative that is being mixed with fentanyl. It was first found in the Philadelphia area in April 2024. Since summer 2024, it has also been found in Massachusetts. By June 2025, medetomidine showed up in drug samples from every county in the state. Central and Western Massachusetts have the highest levels of it in tested drugs.

What to Look Out For

Withdrawal: People who often use drugs with medetomidine in them can become dependent on it. If they stop using medetomidine, they might go through withdrawal. Withdrawal from medetomidine can be serious. It can also start very quickly. It may cause a fast heartbeat, high blood pressure, headache, seizures or shaking, feeling very anxious or upset, or seeing things that aren't there. Some people may need to go to the hospital to feel better.

- If you have these symptoms, get medical help right away. Ask to be tested for medetomidine so they can treat you for it.

Overdose and Sedation: Medetomidine is not an opioid, but it's often found with fentanyl, so giving naloxone (Narcan) for an overdose is still recommended.

- Focus on rescue breathing and make sure the person's chest rises and falls. Wait at least 3 minutes before giving another dose of naloxone. Always call 911 if you can. For information on the Good Samaritan Law, visit preventionpartnersnm.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Good-Sam-Law-poster_revised-2019.pdf
- Because medetomidine is a strong sedative, it can make overdose harder to reverse. The person might only start breathing a little and stay barely awake, so it's important to keep watching them.

Effects

- Medetomidine can cause heavy sleepiness, dry mouth, slow breathing, low heart rate and blood pressure, muscle twitches, and even hallucinations.
- Medetomidine is considered to be stronger and to last longer than xylazine, which is another sedating substance also seen in fentanyl.
- People who used fentanyl with medetomidine said they were: "knocked out instantly; barely able to move, slow breathing, dry mouth, overdose". Other experiences were: "extreme irritability/agitation, hearing things that weren't there".

Safety Resources

Harm Reduction Organizations: Test strips that detect medetomidine are available. If you are concerned about what's in your drugs, contact your local harm reduction program for information about drug checking services or visit info.streetcheck.org/madds For list of harm reduction programs, visit mass.gov/info-details/harm-reduction-program-locator.

SafeSpot Hotline: Safepot is a peer-run, anonymous hotline you can call anytime and someone will stay on to spot you when using alone. Call (800) 972-0590 or visit safe-spot.me

Carry Naloxone: Get naloxone at YouCan [youcan.info]. For other resources go to www.mass.gov/naloxone.

It is important to know if drugs contain medetomidine so you can prepare and stay safe.
Check local drug supply trends at www.streetcheck.org.