



BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Mary Ann Sabo

616.485.1432

or

Anna Kendall

269.804.1646

Berrien County Health Department Raising Awareness About Xylazine

Benton Harbor, Michigan, Jan. 4, 2023 – The Berrien County Health Department is raising awareness about the increase of overdoses involving xylazine, a powerful veterinary sedative that is not approved for human use.

Xylazine, also known as “tranq,” is being found more frequently in the illicit drug supply in Michigan, often mixed with fentanyl or other substances. The effects of xylazine are similar to that of opioids, but with faster onset and longer duration. Some effects include sedation, slowed heart and respiratory rates and low blood pressure. It can be swallowed, smoked, inhaled, snorted or injected.

Since it is not an opioid, naloxone – also known as Narcan – does not reverse the effects of xylazine. When combined with a substance such as fentanyl, the effect on the central nervous and respiratory systems can be deadly.

“The trends we are seeing in Berrien County related to xylazine are concerning,” Health Officer Guy Miller said. “The Health Department is looking to raise awareness about this drug and its dangerous effects so we can work together to keep community members safe and share information about available resources.”

It is difficult to detect xylazine in other drugs because it does not have a distinct taste, smell, color or texture. Individuals may or may not know xylazine is in their drug supply; some reports have found the drug laced in other drugs without an individual’s knowledge.

Berrien County has seen the greatest increase in xylazine-related deaths in Michigan in the past year. In 2022, eight individuals experienced xylazine-related deaths compared to one in 2021.

If you suspect an overdose involves xylazine, follow these steps:

- **Call 911.**
- **Use naloxone (Narcan).** Even though the effects of xylazine cannot be reversed using naloxone, xylazine often is used alongside opioids, which naloxone can reverse, so it should always be administered.
- **Offer [cardiovascular and respiratory support](#)** through rescue breathing – mouth to mouth – or CPR.

Additional information and xylazine resources can be found at berriencounty.org/1877/Xylazine.

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