

PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

DRUG CHECKING PROGRAMS

June 18, 2024



Department
of Health

AIDS
Institute

Situation. The NYSDOH through its Community Drug Checking Program, has identified 2 samples with a combination of compounds including **medetomidine**; a high-potency synthetic sedative used in veterinary medicine. Medetomidine belongs to the same class of agonists as xylazine, romifidine, and detomidine. Veterinary studies have shown medetomidine to be more potent, in the central nervous system than xylazine. In the past six months, public health alerts related to medetomidine have been issued by the [Center for Forensic Science Research and Education](#) and the [City of Philadelphia Department of Health](#).

Sample A

Description. The substance was obtained in Schenectady and collected on 5/24/2024. The substance was yellow/light tan and in powder formulation. The participant assumed the sample to be heroin.

Laboratory confirmed substances. The compounds in the sample included a combination of fentanyl, medetomidine, and caffeine.

Adverse effects. Drug Checking Program participant reported that the substance felt "Overpoweringly strong; Very out of it; falling over (feeling uncoordinated). Definitely did not feel as expected."

Sample B

Description. The substance was obtained in Syracuse and collected on 6/5/2024. The participant assumed the sample to be a combination of heroin, fentanyl, and xylazine.

Laboratory confirmed substances. The compounds in the sample included a combination of xylazine, bromazolam, methamphetamine, medetomidine, and caffeine.

Adverse effects. Drug Checking Program participants reported "strong like they never had before." Participant indicated long-term opioid tolerance but mentioned the long duration of effects. This included being unresponsive to arousal and remaining bedridden for 4-5 hours. The sample suspected to be linked to 2 non-fatal drug overdoses.

HARM REDUCTION

Persons who use drugs should practice harm reduction strategies such as testing substances before use, not being alone during time of use, and having naloxone available. If naloxone is administered, additional contaminants in the substance can cause prolonged sedation which further emphasizes the importance of administering rescue breathing, placing an individual in the rescue position, and monitoring the individual after administration.

Public Health Alert issued by the Office of Drug User Health Drug Checking Program, AIDS Institute, New York State Department of Health.

For more information, including accessing current drug checking trends visit our website [Drug Checking Data \(ny.gov\)](#) or contact our program at drug.checking@health.ny.gov.



AIDS Institute, New York State Department of Health