



# LOCAL DRUG SAMPLE TESTING UPDATE

- Legend:
- (O) Opioids
  - (S) Stimulants
  - (A) Other
  - Active Cut
  - (B) Benzodiazepines
  - (C) Cannabinoids
  - (H) Hallucinogen/Dissociative

testRI is a two-year study to find out what is in the drug supply in Rhode Island and how changes to the supply are impacting people who use drugs in our community. We are testing used equipment, like pipes and syringes, that are collected from the community or donated by individuals or local organizations. Samples are tested using advanced confirmatory toxicology testing (LC-QTOF-MS).

Data below are from two samples collected in November.

\*Data here only represent a sample of the local drug supply in Rhode Island. Because of that, the samples we have collected and tested may not represent the broader drug supply in the state. Samples are also not being tested in relation to overdose so outcomes from use, like overdose, are unknown.

## Sample date & origin

## Sold as (name or appearance):

## What we found:

\* indicated substances that make up most of a sample

November 2022  
Providence



**Xanax**  
(white pill)

Bromazolam\* (B)

November 2022  
Providence



**Ketamine**  
(vial, white powder)

Ketamine\* (H)  
Cocaine (S)

## Why does this matter?

In November 2022 we tested a white pill sold as "Xanax" that contained only the designer benzodiazepine, bromazolam. This sample did not contain any alprazolam, the active ingredient found in pharmaceutical Xanax.

New non-pharmaceutical benzodiazepines ('designer benzodiazepines') have been found in pressed pills in the US, Canada, and Europe. Designer benzodiazepines have not been well-studied, but can be more potent and unpredictable than pharmaceutical benzodiazepines.

The drug supply is volatile and continuously changing. The mixing of drugs with or without the knowledge of people who are using drugs creates higher risk for overdose.

See back page for more info about each substance.

For more info visit: [testri.org](https://testri.org)

## What we found:

**Bromazolam** is a designer benzodiazepine with a similar chemical structure to alprazolam (Xanax). It was first developed in the 1970s and has never been approved for medical use. Bromazolam has been detected in pressed pills sold as pharmaceutical benzodiazepines in the US, Canada, and Europe. However, data on its safety in humans is very limited.

**Designer benzodiazepines** are a class of non-pharmaceutical drugs that are structurally similar to pharmaceutical benzodiazepines. Knowledge of safety and effects in humans is limited. Designer benzodiazepines are expected to produce similar effects to benzodiazepines but may be more potent and/or have unpredictable effects.

**Benzodiazepines** can cause sedation, memory loss, or loss of inhibition (doing risky things without being fully aware). Overdose can lead to deep sedation, loss of consciousness, and decreased or stopped breathing. Overdose risk is higher if benzodiazepines are combined with other sedating substances such as alcohol or opioids. Regular use of benzodiazepines can lead to dependence and withdrawal symptoms if use is stopped.

**Cocaine** is a stimulant that can cause elevated blood pressure and fast heart rate. In overdose it can cause heart problems, seizure, stroke, and muscle and/or kidney injury.

**Ketamine** is an anesthetic that is similar to PCP. Ketamine is often used for its hallucinogenic effects. Ketamine can cause hallucinations, confusion, abnormal behavior, nausea or vomiting, and hypertension. Depending on the dose, it can also cause breathing changes, sedation, abnormal heart rate, seizures or abnormal heart rhythm. Chronic use has been associated with bladder and urinary tract problems.

## How to reduce risk

Because the drug supply is always changing, it can be hard to know what you are buying. Testing your drugs first with fentanyl test strips can be a good first step.

Having naloxone (Narcan) with you is always important so you can respond to an overdose. It is also important to try not to use alone so someone can help you if you experience an overdose.

Start slow and go slow. Using a little bit of your drug at a time can be helpful to test the strength and keep track of your doses.

Try to avoid mixing depressants or downers, like benzos, opioids, and alcohol when you use. Mixing these can increase your risk of an overdose.

