



LOCAL DRUG SAMPLE TESTING UPDATE



Legend:

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

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 December from Providence.

*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:
December 2022 Providence	 Adderall (round orange pill)	* indicated substances that make up most of a sample Methamphetamine* (S) Caffeine (A) Cocaine (S) Etizolam (B)
December 2022 Providence	 Crystal meth (baggie with crystal)	Methamphetamine*(S) Amphetamine* (S) Fentanyl*(O) N-ethylamphetamine (S) Cocaine (S) Methcathinone (S) Para-fluorofentanyl (O) Pholedrine (S) Tramadol (O) 4-ethylamphetamine (S)

Why does this matter?

The December 2022 sample (sold as crystal meth) included fentanyl. Fentanyl exposure can increase the risk of drug overdose. The overdose risk is high in individuals who do not regularly use opioids and do not have tolerance. It is important to use fentanyl test strips when using stimulants to check for the presence of fentanyl.

Pressed pills, or pills that are not from your own prescription and pharmacy, may contain unknown substances that could increase risk of harm. The "Adderall" pill tested contained mostly methamphetamine and also cocaine.

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

What we found:

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.

Fentanyl is a highly potent opioid with high risk for overdose. In overdose it can cause problems with breathing and unresponsiveness.

Fentanyl analogs are drugs that have a similar chemical structure to fentanyl. Potency estimates of illicitly manufactured fentanyl analogs are most often based on limited data as most have not been approved for use or studied in humans. Because of the toxicity of these drugs, lack of familiarity, inconsistent dose, and mixing into drugs which often already include fentanyl, overdose risk is high. Fentanyl analogs in overdose can cause problems breathing and unresponsiveness. Naloxone will work to reverse overdose from fentanyl and fentanyl analogs. Fentanyl analogs found in these samples:

Para-fluorofentanyl (or 4-fluorofentanyl) - Based on limited non-human data, its potency is lower than fentanyl. Para-fluorofentanyl has been reported with increasing frequency in the drug supply since 2020 and has resulted in overdose fatalities.

Methamphetamine and amphetamine are stimulants. Risks include heart problems (e.g., abnormal heart rhythm or rate, heart attack, heart failure), high blood pressure, hallucinations, psychosis, and kidney and/or muscle injury.

Methcathinone (ephedrone) is a synthetic cathinone derivative. Methcathinone was originally produced as an appetite suppressant, but was never marketed.

Methcathinone has been used widely in Russia and across Europe, less commonly in the US. Synthetic cathinones, such as methcathinone, are structurally similar to cathinone, a psychoactive stimulant found in the khat plant. Behavioral effects are similar to methamphetamine and amphetamine.

N-ethylamphetamine and 4-ethylamphetamine are designer drugs with similar structure to amphetamine and have amphetamine-like effects and risk.

Pholedrine (4-hydroxymethamphetamine) is a stimulant used in medicine to increase blood pressure and as an eye drop to cause pupillary dilation. Pholedrine is also a minor breakdown product of methamphetamine.

Tramadol is an opioid that is often prescribed for pain. Recently, it has been found as an active cut in the drug supply. In addition to typical opioid effects, tramadol can sometimes cause seizures and/or hypoglycemia.

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.

