






# LOCAL DRUG SAMPLE TESTING UPDATE

Legend: (O) Opioids (B) Benzodiazepines  
 (S) Stimulants (C) Cannabinoids  
 (A) Other (H) Hallucinogen/  
 Active Cut 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 three samples collected in January 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:
January 2023 Providence	 <b>Pill fragment</b> (sold as Xanax) (White pill with "x")	* indicated substances that make up most of a sample  Etizolam* (B) Flualprazolam* (B) Ketamine (A) Desalkylflurazepam (B) Lidocaine (A) Clonazolam (B)
January 2023 Providence	 <b>Pill</b> (sold as Xanax) (White pill in blister pack)	Alprazolam (Xanax)* (B)
January 2023 Providence	 <b>Pill</b> (sold as Xanax) (White/light blue pill in blister pack)	Bromazolam* (B) Flubromazolam (B) Alprazolam (Xanax) (B)

## Why does this matter?

In January 2023 we tested multiple pill samples sold as "Xanax." Two out of three of the "Xanax" samples presented here contained multiple designer benzodiazepines (e.g., etizolam, flualprazolam, clonazolam, bromazolam).

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

## Why does this matter?

Pressed pills, or pills that are not from your own prescription and pharmacy, may contain unknown substances that could increase risk of harm. Alprazolam, the active ingredient found in pharmaceutical Xanax was detected in two samples, and was the only substance found in one sample.

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. Try to avoid mixing benzodiazepines with alcohol or other sedating substances (e.g., opioids) as this could increase overdose risk.

## What we found:

**Alprazolam (Xanax)** is a benzodiazepine. Benzodiazepines can cause sedation, memory loss, or loss of inhibition (doing risky things without being fully aware). 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.

**Designer benzodiazepines** are a class of non-pharmaceutical drugs that are structurally similar to prescription benzodiazepines. Knowledge of safety and effects in humans is limited. Novel benzodiazepines are expected to produce similar effects to benzodiazepines but may be more potent and/or have unpredictable effects which may increase overdose risk. In these samples we found six different designer benzodiazepines, none of which are approved for medical use in the United States. Etizolam is approved for medical use in some Asian and European countries. Designer benzodiazepines found:

**Bromazolam**  
**Clonazolam**  
**Desalkylflurazepam**  
**Etizolam**  
**Flualprazolam**  
**Flubromazolam**

**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.

**Lidocaine** is a local anesthetic/numbing agent (e.g., used in dentist offices and for topical pain relief). Lidocaine is a common cut in drugs. At standard doses it is safe, but in very high doses can cause heart problems and/or seizures.

For more information about all substances found visit [testri.org](https://testri.org).

## 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.

