





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 April 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:
<p>April 2023 Providence</p>	 <p>Bubble pipe (mixed residue)</p>	<p>* indicated substances that make up most of a sample</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methamphetamine (S)* N-ethylamphetamine (S) Amphetamine (S) Cocaine (S) Methcathinone (S) Pholedrine (S) N-propylamphetamine (S)
<p>April 2023 Providence</p>	 <p>Fentanyl with xylazine (white powder)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fentanyl* (O) Acetylfentanyl (O) Buyrylfentanyl (O) Acrylfentanyl (O) Cocaine (S) Xylazine (A)

Why does this matter?

In April 2023 we tested the first sample that was reported sold as containing xylazine in addition to fentanyl. That sample had fentanyl as a main substance and trace amounts of xylazine and fentanyl analogues detected. The pipe we tested contained a range of stimulants, but did not contain opioids.

Naloxone will reverse the effects of fentanyl, fentanyl analogs and other opioids, but has not been documented to reverse xylazine effects. In all of our testing thus far, xylazine has been present with fentanyl. Given naloxone if you suspect an overdose.

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.

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:

Acetylfentanyl

Acrylfentanyl

Butyrylfentanyl

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 n-propylamphetamine 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.

Xylazine is a veterinary sedative. Xylazine is a long-acting and sedating medication, but it is not an opioid. Especially if combined with other sedating medications it can cause unresponsiveness, low blood pressure, a slowed heart rate, and decreased breathing. Xylazine use has been associated with skin ulcers and infection. Chronic use can also lead to dependence and a withdrawal syndrome that can cause irritability, anxiety, and dysphoria.

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.

