

Medetomidine Fast Facts

What is medetomidine?

- Medetomidine, or “rhino tranq,” is a veterinary sedative, similar to xylazine (“tranq”), that is 100 to 200 times more potent than xylazine.
- Medetomidine is not an opioid and has been found in the local illicit drug supply. In Clark County, as of January 2026, it has only been detected in samples also containing fentanyl.

What are the effects of medetomidine?

- The main effect of medetomidine is heavy sedation, but it can also cause low blood pressure and slow heart rate, dizziness, extreme tiredness, shortness of breath, nausea, blurred vision and confusion.
- Because of the heavy sedation, someone who overdoses from a drug containing medetomidine may stay sedated and non-responsive after receiving naloxone, even if the opioid aspect of the overdose is successfully reversed.
- Medetomidine is not an opioid, so the sedation from medetomidine will not be reversed by naloxone.

Does naloxone (Narcan) reverse medetomidine-involved overdoses?

- Medetomidine is not an opioid, so naloxone will not reverse a purely medetomidine overdose. However, because medetomidine is typically found in combination with other opioids, specifically fentanyl, naloxone should still be administered when an opioid-involved overdose is suspected.

- When reversing an overdose, it is important to focus on the person breathing rather than responsiveness. This means ensuring that the person takes at least one breath every five seconds and is not pale, gray or blue. Monitor the person until they become responsive or until under the care of an emergency medical services (EMS) provider. More tips on overdose response can be found at [6 Things to Know about Overdose Response](#).
- To find where to access to naloxone in Clark County, please visit the Health District’s [Substance Use Dashboard](#).

Can a person experience withdrawal from medetomidine?

- Yes. Medetomidine withdrawal can start quickly and be very serious. Monitor withdrawal symptoms and seek a higher level of care as needed.
- Symptoms of medetomidine withdrawal can start rapidly and include:
 - Fast heart rate (greater than 100 beats per minute)
 - Dangerously high blood pressure (greater than 180/100)
 - Uncontrollable nausea and vomiting
 - Tremor
 - Excessive sweating
 - Changes in levels of alertness

Is there a way to test for medetomidine?

Medetomidine test strips are not currently available from the Health District. However, drug samples will continue to be tested and emerging drugs identified through the Health District's community surveillance program.

Does medetomidine cause skin wounds?

Research has not shown an association between medetomidine and skin wounds.

Where can someone access naloxone or drug test strips in Clark County?

Visit the Substance Use Dashboard at [Healthy Southern Nevada](#) to get up to date links to naloxone and drug test strip resources for overdose prevention. Fentanyl and xylazine test strips are also available by mail through the [Health District's Strip Club](#).

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Southern Nevada Health District



For more information, call **702-759-1000** or visit **www.SNHD.info**.