



## Medetomidine and Dexmedetomidine

Medetomidine (meh-deh-TOH-mih-deen) is a medication used by veterinarians for animal sedation. Like [xylazine](#), medetomidine is not approved for human use. Dexmedetomidine (deks-meh-deh-TOH-mih-deen) is approved for clinical use including sedation and pain relief in animals and humans.

Medetomidine/dexmedetomidine\* have been found in the unregulated drug supply in Ontario. They can be “cut” (mixed) into opioids and other drugs that are sold in the unregulated supply.

### Be aware, both medetomidine and dexmedetomidine:

- can cause extreme drowsiness and sedation, especially when present with other depressant substances like opioids, [benzodiazepines and xylazine](#);
- are being reported together as medetomidine/dexmedetomidine\* because it is not currently possible to differentiate between them ([Toronto’s Drug Checking Service](#));
- can cause slow, irregular, or stopped breathing, and decreases in blood pressure and heart rate;
- are not opioids, so naloxone will not affect them, but naloxone will work on opioids that may also be present. Naloxone should be used in a suspected overdose. If in doubt, follow the [The 5 Steps to Respond to an Opioid Overdose](#).

### Individuals who use drugs are reminded:

- **Carry naloxone:** Naloxone is a medication that can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. Naloxone kits are available at no cost in Ontario. Please visit [StopOverdoseOttawa.ca](#) to find out how to get a naloxone kit.
- **Don’t use alone:** A buddy system is safer than using alone. If you are using with someone else, don’t use at the exact same time.
- **If you do use alone, tell someone before you use:** Have a safety plan which includes having someone come check on you. You can also call the [National Overdose Prevention Line](#) at 1-888-688-NORS (6677) or connect with an anonymous virtual harm reduction supporter via the [Brave App](#).
- **If you choose to use:** Consider visiting one of the four [Supervised Consumption and Treatment Services](#) locations in Ottawa.
- **Get your drugs checked before using:** Walk-in drug checking services are available at [Sandy Hill Community Health Centre](#) and for registered clients of [Ottawa Inner City Health’s Consumption and Treatment Service](#).
- **Don’t mix drugs:** Using more than one drug at a time puts you at a higher risk of overdose.
- **Know your tolerance:** The risk of overdose increases if you are using for the first time or if you haven’t used in more than three days.
- **Go slow:** The toxicity of unregulated drugs is unpredictable.

If you have a friend or family member who uses drugs, you are encouraged to:

- **Know the signs of an overdose ([link is external](#)) and call 9-1-1 immediately if you witness an overdose.**
- **Carry naloxone ([link is external](#))** – a medication that can temporarily reverse an opioid overdose.

Visit [StopOverdoseOttawa.ca](#) for more information on overdose prevention and harm reduction services.