



Poison HOTLINE

1-800-222-1222

May 2023



Did you know

“BORG” is a relatively recent social media drinking trend popular among teens and college students. Borg stands for “blackout rage gallon,” a gallon jug filled with a mix of alcohol (usually a fifth of vodka), water, and a flavor enhancer containing caffeine or electrolytes. Drinkers claim that borg use is associated with less risk of drink spiking and spread of infectious diseases because they can be capped shut and are made for a single person. Users claim that the water and electrolytes prevent a hangover. Borgs are typically labeled with a memorable name such as “Borganic Chemistry”, “Borgan Donor”, Battle of Gettysborg”. Borgs contain large amounts of alcohol (~17 standard drinks) that can result in alcohol poisoning. While hydration might help reduce the symptoms of a hangover, large amounts of alcohol can still lead to hangovers. Borg, like any type of binge drinking, can lead to other health effects and risks.

What to Know About Xylazine

You’ve probably been hearing in recent months about a veterinary tranquilizer called xylazine that is infiltrating street drugs, particularly illicit fentanyl. The DEA recently warned that xylazine was found in nearly a quarter of the fentanyl powder it seized in 2022. It is used as an adulterant in illicit opioids such as fentanyl and heroin for its synergistic effect.

Xylazine is an alpha-2 adrenergic agonist approved for veterinary use only. Alpha-2 (α_2) agonists stimulate presynaptic α_2 receptors in the CNS and periphery which inhibits sympathetic nervous system activity. This decreased sympathetic activity leads to sedation, bradycardia, and hypotension. Toxicity can also include miosis and respiratory depression which can strongly resemble an opioid overdose.

Paradoxically, in overdose, α_2 agonists like xylazine can initially induce a peripheral vasoconstriction from a brief catecholamine release, which results in an early, transient increase in blood pressure. Treatment of early hypertension is not typically recommended and may cause worsening of the eventual hypotension. Additionally, people who inject drugs containing xylazine can develop severe wounds such as skin ulcers and abscesses that can necrotize. Xylazine withdrawal is not well-defined and may include irritability, anxiety, tachycardia, and hypertension.

Although xylazine has been found in multiple overdoses and fatalities, it is often combined with opioids such as fentanyl or heroin (referred to as “tranq” or “tranq dope”), so it is difficult to determine what role xylazine itself contributed to the outcome of these overdoses. Xylazine is not included in routine immunoassay toxicology screens.

Treatment for α_2 agonist toxicity includes good supportive care (intubation and ventilation as indicated, atropine or adrenergic agonists for symptomatic bradycardia, vasopressor for hypotension and bradycardia). There is some literature supporting the use of naloxone for α_2 toxicity but results are inconsistent. Naloxone should still be used to reverse respiratory depression from fentanyl or other opioids often found in these drug overdoses so still recommended. Call **1-800-222-1222** for treatment recommendations.

*Linda B. Kalin, RN, BS, CSPI
Certified Specialist in Poison Information*



Hotline Editor: Bryan Wilson, MD

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