



Responding to Crack and Methamphetamine: Smoking Kits and Common Unexpected Cuts

From The Massachusetts Drug Supply Data Stream (MADDS)

Responding to Smoking

While no form of drug consumption is entirely safe, and all drugs carry potential risks and harmful effects, smoking can be associated with less risks and can be considered a safer alternative to injection. Some partners are providing smoking education through harm reduction methods such as smoking kits. Smoking kits may include, but are not limited to: pipes, steel wool, mouthpieces, screens/filters, sanitation materials, fentanyl test strips (FTS), and Narcan/naloxone.

People who smoke drugs can have other health problems due to the following cuts:

- Fentanyl:** A highly potent opioid with a high risk of overdose. Fentanyl may slow or stop breathing, cause unresponsiveness, or decreased levels of consciousness. Fentanyl has been seen in cocaine powder/rock forms (see images) and can sometimes be mistaken for cocaine/crack.
- Xylazine:** A long-acting sedative, but not an opioid. It can cause decreased consciousness, increased unresponsiveness, low blood sugar, slowed heart rate, and reduced breathing. In Massachusetts, xylazine has primarily been seen in opioids through MADDS drug checking.
- Levamisole:** A veterinary drug with a similar appearance to cocaine/crack. It enhances the euphoria associated with cocaine because it has amphetamine-like effects. It may give cocaine a shiny, fresh look, but it is not easily recognizable without drug checking. Levamisole can cause purple skin lesions, weakened immune system, and other health problems.



Examples of cocaine/crack samples contaminated with fentanyl collected by MADDS

Images courtesy DrugsData.org

Frequently Asked Questions	Fentanyl	Xylazine	Levamisole
Are there common signs/symptoms associated with it (see above)?	✓	✓	✓
Can a fentanyl test strip (FTS) be used to detect it?	✓	✗	✗
Is it sometimes found in cocaine/crack?	✓	✓	✓
Is it commonly found in fentanyl/heroin/fake pain pills?	✓	✓	✗
Does it respond to Narcan/naloxone?	✓	✗	✗
Does it enhance the risk of overdose?	✓	✓	✗

For **Xylazine Info** and Other Resources



Harmful Health Effects and Harm Reduction Tips

- Someone who has taken too much of a stimulant by injection, snorting, or smoking may experience these harmful health effects: overheating, heart attacks, seizures, and strokes. Combining fentanyl or other opioids with stimulants on purpose or by accident increases the risk of overdose (**see above for effects of fentanyl**).
- Levamisole can cause: purple skin lesions, kidney disease, fever, fatigue, flu-like symptoms, night sweats, weight loss, and a weakened immune system. If you notice a wound, **encourage connection to medical professionals**.
- Xylazine can contribute to oversedation alongside opioids. Although naloxone will not reverse oversedation from xylazine, it **WILL** reverse slow or stopped breathing from fentanyl. So **give Narcan (naloxone)** if someone is not breathing enough, **give rescue breaths or chest compressions** until they are breathing on their own, and if they are passed out but still breathing, **put them in the recovery position** and monitor them while waiting for emergency medical services. For more on xylazine, scan the QR code above.



If someone passes out after using, but is still breathing **put them in the recovery position**, as shown here, while monitoring and waiting for emergency medical services.

*All samples were provided by harm reduction programs or donated by police departments for MADDS testing. MADDS is a state funded collaboration between Brandeis University, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, various town police departments, and local harm reduction agencies. For more information, scan the QR code above, visit streetcheck.org, or contact us at maddsbrandeis@gmail.com.