

NITAZENES

SYNTHETIC OPIOIDS

DRUGS IN SCOTLAND ARE CHANGING

SYNTHETIC OPIOIDS CALLED NITAZENES HAVE BEEN FOUND IN DRUGS SUCH AS HEROIN, BENZODIAZEPINES, AND COUNTERFEIT PAINKILLERS, CAUSING NEAR-FATAL OVERDOSES, HOSPITALISATIONS, AND DEATHS.

ABOUT NITAZENES

Nitazenes are a category of synthetic opioids many times stronger than heroin, morphine and fentanyl, in some cases up to 500 times stronger. This means a much smaller amount is required to get the desired effect, and poses an increased risk of overdose, respiratory depression and death.

Nitazenes are most commonly detected as a contaminant in drugs sold as heroin, benzodiazepines and oxycodone but have the potential to be found alongside other drugs including counterfeit medication.

Depending on the form they are found, nitazenes can be injected, swallowed, or inhaled either by snorting or smoking.

Where nitazenes are present, there may be no change to taste, smell, colour, texture or how drugs appear when prepared for use, but strength can vary, even within the same batch.

The only way to know the contents of your drugs is by having them checked. Drug checking can be carried out by sending samples of concern to www.wedinos.org through their postal service.

Synthetic opioids like nitazenes can cause a very sudden overdose which can be life-threatening.

RECOGNISE OVERDOSE

Knowing how to recognise and respond to an overdose can save lives.

People have reported seeing or experiencing sudden collapse, in combination with some or all of the following:

- **Unresponsiveness** (no reaction to shaking or shouting)
- **Snoring or noisy breathing**
- **Blue or pale lips and skin**
- **Shallow breathing**
- **Pinpoint pupils**
- **Seizures/fits** (*rarer & more often reported when cocaine has been used*)

RESPONDING TO AN OVERDOSE

- **Call 999 immediately**
- **Ask for an ambulance** and tell them it may be an overdose. Follow the instructions of the call handler which may include giving first aid
- **Administer naloxone** (if available)
- **Naloxone temporarily reverses opioid overdoses** by restoring breathing, buying time until medical help arrives
- **How to use naloxone:** Naloxone should be given to anyone who is unresponsive and displaying the signs of an overdose. You may need to administer more repeat doses than usual, leaving 2-3 minutes between doses.
- **Stay with the person - Do not leave them alone.** Keep them in a safe position and monitor their breathing until help arrives
- **Where to get naloxone:** Free naloxone kits are available in Scotland from drug services, SFAD's Click and Deliver service or some pharmacies

HARM REDUCTION

- **Try not to use alone.** If possible, have someone with you who can respond in an emergency
- **Use in turns.** If using with others, stagger your use so someone is alert to respond
- **Take a smaller amount** – take less than you usually would and wait as long as you can before using more
- **Always carry naloxone** if you or someone you know uses drugs. Get naloxone – from a local treatment service, harm reduction service, SFAD click and deliver or some pharmacies
- **Try to avoid knowingly mixing substances.** This is challenging when there are often multiple substances in the one drug but combining drugs (including alcohol and prescribed medication) increases overdose risk
- **If someone is intoxicated, don't leave them alone**
- **Check your drugs.** Drug checking can be carried out by sending samples of concern to www.wedinos.org through their postal service. You can also use nitazene testing strips; please note that results from testing strips may not always be reliable
- **Consider accessing treatment** - being in treatment is a protective factor against overdose. Contact your local treatment service

FURTHER SUPPORT & RESOURCES

For more information and resources: www.stopthedeaths.com

- **Free online training:** SDF Overdose Prevention, Intervention & Naloxone
- **Order a free naloxone kit:** SFAD Click & Deliver
- **Local drug support services:** Scottish Drug Services Directory
- **Needle exchange locations:** Scottish Needle Exchange Directory
- **Support for families:** If you are affected by someone else's alcohol or drug use, contact Scottish Families www.sfad.org.uk
- Share information about drugs with **RADAR**, Scotland's Drugs Early Warning System

Link to RADAR here

