Updated April 27, 2026

Health Alert: Medetomidine and Guidelines for Managing Exposure

Background

The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) has confirmed an increasing presence of medetomidine in the New Jersey (NJ) illicit opioid/fentanyl supply through various data sources. Medetomidine is a non-opioid veterinary tranquilizer (alpha-2 agonist) similar to xylazine, but 100-200 times more potent. It is not U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved for human consumption. Use of medetomidine can lead to health risks including heavy sedation, confusion, dizziness, a slow heart rate, low blood pressure and can also cause severe and potentially life-threatening withdrawal symptoms when use is discontinued. Potential withdrawal symptoms from medetomidine may include a dangerous increase in heart rate and blood pressure, tremors, nausea and uncontrollable vomiting, sweating and confusion.

The purpose of this health alert is to bring awareness to the prevalence of medetomidine and its health risks to NJ hospitals, healthcare providers, and community-based partners who may encounter patients who have used substances adulterated with medetomidine. Attached to this health alert are two resources with information about medetomidine risks, overdose response, harm reduction practices and treatment protocols:

- New Jersey Harm Reduction Coalition (NJHRC) **Medetomidine One-Pager** for people who use drugs and harm reduction programs
- Southern New Jersey Medication for Addiction Treatment Center of Excellence (SNJMATCOE) **Guidance for Managing Medetomidine Exposure** for healthcare providers, including a protocol for treatment of Medetomidine withdrawal
    - Link to PDF version of the document below

Further, on April 2, 2026, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) distributed an official health advisory on the Health Alert Network (HAN) titled *"Medetomidine in the U.S. Illegal Fentanyl Supply Increasing Risk for Overdose and Severe Withdrawal Symptoms".* Below is a link to the health alert for your awareness.

https://www.cdc.gov/han/php/notices/han00527.html

For more information:

- Click the link below to view the Guidance for Managing Medetomidine Exposure document on SNJMATCOE's website.
  https://www.snjmatcoe.org/_files/ugd/95ea9d_5088752700d34dac88df93272d20f394.pdf
- Click the link below to view the New Jersey Harm Reduction Coalition's (NJHRC) website, which also includes the **Medetomidine One-Pager** for people who use drugs and harm reduction programs.
  https://njharmreduction.org/medetomidine/

- If you are interested in receiving CDC HAN alerts, please visit https://www.cdc.gov/han/php/about/index.html to subscribe.
- Questions about this Health Alert can be directed to Amanda Gan at the New Jersey Department of Health at Amanda.Gan@doh.nj.gov.
- For media inquiries regarding medetomidine, visit the link below and complete the digital press intake form at https://www.nj.gov/health/news/home/contact.shtml.