

## What is it?

Xylazine (sometimes called “Tranq”) is actually meant for animals such as horses. But these days, it’s showing up in street drugs like fentanyl or heroin. Most people don’t plan to use it; it’s just in the mix. You can get exposed by injecting, smoking, or snorting.

One thing about Xylazine: it’s rough on skin. It can cause wounds just about anywhere on the body, but arms and lower legs are the usual spots. They often start small and like a blister or tiny sore, but can grow fast if you don’t catch them early.

## Check yourself before it gets worse

If you’re using anything that might have Xylazine, try to do a quick skin check every day. Early wounds are easier to handle than big ones.

## Early treatment is key

These wounds don’t mess around. They grow fast. Treat them every 1–2 days, or sooner if your bandages are soaked.

1. **Clean it up.** Use saline, BZK wipes, or clean water. Don’t scrub, just rinse and remove what comes off easily.
2. **Protect the edges.** Skip alcohol, peroxide, or bleach which can burn and dry it out. Use Vaseline (if you’ve got it) around the wound to shield healthy skin.
3. **Keep it moist, not wet.** Put Vaseline on non-stick gauze or cloth. That’s your inner dressing.
4. **Cover it right.** Add dry gauze or cloth on top to soak up drainage. Wrap it with tape or bandage snug, not tight. Never tape all the way around a limb. It cuts off blood flow and slows healing.
5. **Try to avoid injecting into the wound.** It can make the wound heal much slower. Healing takes time. Be patient. Stay consistent.

## When to seek medical attention

If you notice any of these signs, get medical care immediately:

- Fever, chills, or nausea (even after using your substance of choice)
- Pain that’s getting worse
- Skin that’s red, swollen, dark, hard or hot
- Numbness or loss of movement
- Bone or tendon showing
- Drainage or pus that’s increasing
- Wound growing rapidly

Early Stage



Late Stage



“Late Stage” wound image reproduced from HEAL-X: A Novel Classification System for Xylazine Associated Wounds, [International Wound Journal], [2025].

## Talk to a nurse

**Call:** 1-800-265-7293 ext. 7006 Mon-Fri, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**Email:** [clientcommunitysupport@wdgpublichealth.ca](mailto:clientcommunitysupport@wdgpublichealth.ca)

**[wdgpublichealth.ca](http://wdgpublichealth.ca)**