OVERDOSE RESPONSE CENTER

Delaware Partner Information Bulletin

#2024-01

BROMAZOLAM

What is Bromazolam or "Designer Xanax?"

- Bromazolam is a "designer" benzodiazepine, never approved for therapeutic use in the United States.
- Common street names include "designer Xanax" or "benzo-dope." There is an increased risk for inclusion of bromazolam in counterfeit benzodiazepine street products such as "Xanax Bars."
- Currently classified as a Novel Psychoactive Substance (NPS).
- Bordering states have reported a recent increase of bromazolam in their illicit drug supply.
- Delaware has confirmed the presence of bromazolam in the state, typically mixed with fentanyl and xylazine.

Risks Associated with Bromazolam

- Combined with opioids, bromazolam will increase the risk of side effects and overdose, often requiring intubation and hospitalization.
- Bromazolam exhibits potent sedative, hypnotic, and anxiolytic (anxiety reducing) effects.
- Common effects include loss of coordination, drowsiness, sedation, dizziness, blurred vision, slurred speech, muscle relaxation, and respiratory depression. These are heightened when used with opioids.
- At higher doses effects include convulsions, delirium, auditory and visual hallucinations, and the potential for overdose death.

Standard Overdose Response Procedures

- Standard overdose response procedures are recommended for bromazolam-involved overdoses. This includes:
  - If drugs are visible on/near the person, use gloves and face mask with eye protection when providing aid.
  - Do not touch the eyes, nose, or mouth after touching any surface that may be contaminated, even if wearing gloves.
  - Wash hands with soap and water after working in an area that may be contaminated, even if gloves are worn. Do not use hand sanitizer or bleach. *(Source: DPH OEMS)*
  - Follow standard overdose response steps, and administer naloxone to restore normal breathing, per the community standing order.
  - Repeat dose(s) of naloxone may be necessary to restore normal breathing with bromazolam-involved overdoses. After breathing is restored, additional doses are not necessary to cause patients to become "awake." Remember, naloxone is only to restore normal breathing.
  - Clients/patients may have effects from bromazolam for 2-4 days. Some patients may show slow cognitive effects for an even longer period. If patient is severely affected; Intensive Care Unit (ICU) level care may be needed.
- Due to the severity of bromazolam-related withdrawal and side effects patients should be monitored in a hospital. Strongly encourage all overdose patients to accept treatment and transport to the hospital.

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
DIVISION OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH

Contact: ORC@delaware.gov

Approved: 06 May 2024

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Brent Waninger, ORC Director

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Treatment Provider Awareness

- While routine UDS may show as benzodiazepine positive, confirmatory mass spectrometry testing is likely needed to confirm bromazolam specifically.
- When combined with opioids for extended durations, withdrawal from benzodiazepines can occur along with opioid withdrawal while in detox or in treatment with MOUD. Benzodiazepine withdrawal itself can be life threatening, and may require monitoring in a hospital setting.
- Emphasize with staff and clients the importance of using naloxone in all suspected overdoses.
- Repeat dose(s) of naloxone may be necessary in these incidents to restore normal breathing. After breathing is restored, additional doses are not necessary to cause patients to become "awake." Remember, naloxone is only to restore normal breathing.
- Early activation of 9-1-1/EMS is vital in these cases. Clients/patients should be encouraged to accept treatment/transport to the ED for additional care that may be needed.
  - Effects from bromazolam may last for 2-4 days. Some clients/patients may show slow cognitive effects for an even longer period. In more severe cases, hospital Intensive Care Unit (ICU) level care may be needed.
- Educate and discuss with clients appropriate precautions and encourage harm reduction techniques:
  - There is an increased risk of more severe overdose effects with bromazolam.
  - Do not use alone. Notify someone about use, or have other people around, to help in event of accidental overdose.
  - Encourage your patients/clients to test their illicit substances.
  - Individuals should be aware of the risk of bromazolam in counterfeit street benzo such as Xanax bars.
  - Carry and use naloxone on friends/family members to treat an overdose.
- Common withdrawal symptoms for benzodiazepines (including bromazolam) include:

- Hand Tremors	- Retching (dry heaving)	- Headache	- Sweating
- Increased Anxiety	- Nausea	- Muscular Pain	- Panic Attacks
- Palpitations	- Convulsions	- Difficulty in Concentration	

Sources

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