

# NSW COMMUNITY DRUG ALERT



## Overdoses from strong opioids (nitazenes) in black market vape juice

At least three opioid overdoses in NSW (including one death) have been linked to powerful synthetic opioids called nitazenes (a potent synthetic opioid) in illicit vape juice. In one case, the person thought the vape refill liquid contained a synthetic cannabinoid (similar to THC) but it actually contained a nitazene.

Nitazenes can be stronger and last longer than fentanyl. Nitazenes can also affect a person's breathing more than other opioids. Overdose has occurred in a matter of minutes, with as little as 6-8 puffs of a vape if it contains a nitazene, even in people who are used to using opioids.

Fentanyl test strips will not detect nitazenes.

### REDUCING YOUR RISK OF HARM

- Be aware that opioids (like nitazenes) and other drugs can be present in black market vape juice - and you might be sold something different than what you think you're buying
- If you have bought or mixed a new vape liquid that contains drugs, have a friend present the first time you try it so they can get you help if you overdose. Try it slowly the first time and stop using the vape if you are getting unexpected or unwanted effects
- If you use opioids, nitazenes are not a good option. They are far stronger than most other opioids and an overdose can be caused by taking even a tiny bit more than usual
- Don't use opioids with other downers (like benzos, GHB/GBL, other opioids or alcohol)
- [Order some naloxone](#) (a medication to reverse opioid overdose) to keep with you if you use drugs (even if you don't intend to use opioids)

### SIGNS OF OPIOID OVERDOSE

- **Drowsy or unconsciousness – can't be woken up**
- **Difficulty speaking or walking**
- **Shallow breathing, irregular breathing or not breathing**
- **Unusual snoring sounds (gurgling, choking)**
- **Blue lips and fingertips (if light skinned) or greyish or ashen lips and fingertips (if dark skinned)**
- **Pin point pupils**

### RESPONDING TO OVERDOSE

- Seek help immediately from your nearest emergency department or call Triple Zero (000)
- You won't get into trouble for seeking help
- If someone is not breathing, start CPR if you know how
- Use naloxone if you have it. Call '000' even if naloxone has been given and stay with them until you're sure they're safe



For non-judgemental support from experienced members of the drug-using community, DM us or call our **PeerLine** on **1800 644 413**

NSW Health clinician Safety Notice can be found here: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/aod/clinical-safety-alerts/Pages/default.aspx>