**Drug alert**

**A white-brown powder containing the potent opioid ‘metonitazene’ may be sold as ketamine or heroin.**

**Metonitazene is a potent synthetic opioid**

**Opioids** arecentral nervous system depressants that produce effects including pain relief, sedation and respiratory depression (where breathing slows or stops). Respiratory depression often appears more quickly with **potent synthetic opioids** (PSOs), increasing the risk of life-threatening overdose.

**Metonitazene** is a PSO. Its potency is **similar to fentanyl**, estimated to be between **30 and 200 times** that of morphine. This means very small amounts can produce **life-threatening toxic effects** such as loss of consciousness, respiratory depression and hypoxia (insufficient oxygen for normal functioning).

**Be cautious about any powder with a white-brown colour or tinge, especially if sold as ketamine or heroin**

Two people in Melbourne were **recently exposed** to metonitazene after using a powder **sold as ketamine**. The substance was described as **‘white-brown and chunky’**, but **easily crumbled into a powder**. Blood testing also showed **evidence of heroin** and it is possible that this substance **could be sold as heroin**.

**People who are expecting to use ketamine** may not know how to recognise and respond to opioid overdose. Someone might appear to be entering a ‘K-Hole’ (a dissociative state brought on by higher doses of ketamine) but could actually be showing signs of opioid overdose. **Signs of opioid overdose** to look out for include: breathing slowly, reduced consciousness (meaning someone is hard to rouse or wake), and tiny pupils in some cases. More information about opioid overdose symptoms can be found [here](https://www.penington.org.au/between-us/between-us-overdose-and-naloxone/).

**Using metonitazene or other opioids with depressants** such as alcohol, GHB or benzodiazepines (‘Xanax’, ‘Valium’, ‘Mylan’, etc) **increases the risk of overdose**.

**Reduce the risk of harm + get naloxone to reverse opioid overdose**

If you experience adverse drug effects, or are present when someone has an unexpected reaction, **seek help immediately by calling Triple Zero (000)**.

All alcohol and other drug use comes with risks, so take these precautions:

* **Get free naloxone** and **carry it with you** – no matter what drugs you think you’re getting. Naloxone is an **easy-to-use medication** that can **reverse opioid overdose** – it is safe to use even if you are not sure whether someone has taken opioids. Naloxone can be **accessed free of charge** at participating pharmacies and health services – find an approved naloxone provider [here](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/aod-treatment-services/victorias-take-home-naloxone-program).
* **Avoid using drugs alone** and **ask one person to wait** until the effects are known – especially if using a new batch. This will ensure at least one person can call 000 and use naloxone if required.
* **Be aware** that other false or contaminated drug products may circulate in Victoria, even if no specific warning has been issued about them.
* **Remember**, even ‘pure’ drugs can produce serious side effects and death and can interact dangerously with medications/pharmaceutical drugs. Get the facts from [the Alcohol and Drug Foundation website](https://adf.org.au/drug-facts/).

Contact **Harm Reduction Victoria’s DanceWize and peer team** for anonymous support and education from peers. Talk to them by email at info@dancewize.org.au or admin@hrvic.org.au.

If you or someone you know needs help with alcohol or drug use, call DirectLine on 1800 888 236 or visit [directline.org.au](https://www.directline.org.au/) for information and support to access treatment.