



What's in Reno's Drug Supply?

Results - April/May 2026



What the Cut is a free, confidential, and anonymous drug checking program that analyzes tiny samples of drugs or residue to understand what's actually in them.



Since May 2024, we've tested 237 samples from Washoe County.

April / May samples: 82

"Expected" means what the sample is believed to be.

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Information on treatment,
naloxone, & test strips:

behavioralhealthnv.org 988lifeline.org

Expected methamphetamine: 61

59/61 had methamphetamine

58/59 had only methamphetamine and its byproducts (DMA)

- DMA was in 28% of these samples

1/59 had cocaine + methamphetamine

2/61 (3%) had no methamphetamine.

One sample had only nicotine

The other had no identifiable substances

Expected cocaine: 2

2/2 had only cocaine

Expected carfentanil: 1

had only methamphetamine

Expected fentanyl + methamphetamine: 1

had methamphetamine, fentanyl, and fentanyl precursors*

Expected fentanyl: 16

11 (69%) had fentanyl

5/11 had only fentanyl + precursors*

1/11 had fentanyl + methamphetamine

5/11 had fentanyl + cuts:

4: levamisole 2: lidocaine
2: mannitol 1: xylazine

most had more than one

⚠️ 1: medetomidine

5/16 had no fentanyl:

2/5 only had methamphetamine

3/5 had no identifiable substances

Expected heroin: 1

33% metamphetamine

22% heroin

2% 6-Monoacetylmorphine

also had traces of acetylcodeine, noscapine, and papaverine (cuts)

*Precursors are related substances used to manufacture the desired drug

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Discard after: 8/30/2026

A Closer Look

What's medetomidine?

In late May 2026, one fentanyl sample returned a concerning substance we haven't seen before in Washoe County.

The sample was mainly fentanyl, but also had levamisole and medetomidine.

What is it?

Medetomidine is a sedative; like xylazine but stronger.



Like xylazine, it's not affected by Narcan.

It was used in human surgery in the past, but has now replaced by safer options because its effects on breathing and heart rate can be life-threatening.

Risks

For people using medetomidine consistently, withdrawal is complex and can require medical care ASAP.

It's a sedative, and slows breathing until unconsciousness, but other side effects include:

- visual hallucinations
- agitation
- slow or unusual heart-rate

Since we've seen a local fentanyl sample with medetomidine, be aware of potential symptoms of its use.



What we know



A lot of what we know about medetomidine comes from east coast drug checking and doctors where it's common in opioids.

Drug checking experts at UNC found that people describe the effects of medetomidine as:

"sedating"
"stronger"
"trippy"



In fact, 17% reported hallucinations described as "psychedelic" and "dissociative."

We don't know if this is normal during repeated medetomidine use, or if this reflects what people experience in their first exposure(s) to it.

Unexpected exposure can be dangerous or scary, but chronic medetomidine exposure often requires medical care or hospitalization to prevent serious harm



Learn more



Philadelphia's drug checking alert about medetomidine

Clinical fact sheet – ASAM (American Society of Addiction Medicine)



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