



Alert from the NDEWS Web Monitoring Team: Online mentions of Pentobarbital

What was found? NDEWS leadership recently published a paper on [illicit pentobarbital use and availability](#). The Web Monitoring team last reported on discussion trends surrounding pentobarbital on April 12th. Since then, discussion of the substance has nearly doubled, and discussion of non-suicidal recreational pentobarbital use, in particular, has increased.

What is Pentobarbital? Pentobarbital is a short-acting barbiturate. In the past, it has been used as a sedative, to control convulsions, and for short-term treatment of insomnia. It has also been used in some US states for lethal injections, as well as by other countries, such as the Netherlands, for physician-assisted suicide.

How is it being discussed? The discussion still mostly revolves around the use of the substance for suicide. Commenters are particularly interested in how to acquire the substance, how to ensure its authenticity, and what additional actions need to be taken to ensure suicide. The discussion primarily revolves around the proper dosage and potential health issues. There has been a comparatively higher volume of discussion in the past four months surrounding pentobarbital's recreational use. A primary discussion of recreational use revolves around using small amounts of pentobarbital for opioid-like effects, benzodiazepine-like effects, as a sleep aid, or for chronic pain management. Reddit users comment on the relative ease of acquiring the substance compared to barbiturates with similar effects. Discussion around polysubstance use of pentobarbital has increased significantly. Commenters most commonly discuss combining pentobarbital with otherwise legal psychoactive substances such as aspirin or caffeine as well as a much smaller amount of discussion surrounding combining pentobarbital with psychedelics.

Expert Insight: "Through collaboration with our NDEWS sentinel sites and affiliates, we have learned that there have been seizures of counterfeit pills pressed as M30s found to contain pentobarbital in addition to fentanyl and xylazine. There have also been several recent diversions of prescription pentobarbital, large seizures of pentobarbital powder, and there have been some recorded deaths involving the drug, often with suicide being the cause of death. We need to continue to monitor this potent barbiturate as it has the potential to further complicate the opioid crisis."
-NDEWS Deputy Director Joseph Palamar

Drug Terms Searched: Pentobarbital, pento