Sentinel Site Report - January 2026:
What can you tell us about trends involving nitazenes in the local drug supply?

Seattle, WA: Caleb Banta-Green, PhD, MPH, MSW & Jason Williams, PhD

Nitazene detection remains low. We saw 3 positive nitazene detections in community drug checking samples across King County between September 2024 - March 2025, and none since. In 2024, a nitazene was detected by the state crime lab in 1 case submitted from King County, and there was also 1 death involving nitazenes reported by the county medical examiner that year.

Denver, CO: Tyler Coyle, MD

Nitazene-involved fatal overdoses in CO by year based on data from Colorado Dept of Public Health and Environment, Vital Statistics Program: 2021 - <3; 2022 - 7; 2023 - 4; 2024 - 4; 2025 - 0 (provisional, subject to change).

San Francisco, CA: Phillip Coffin, MD, MIA

Nitazenes are rarely detected in the local drug supply. Most recent mortality data reporting nitazene involvement note 4 deaths: 3 in 2024 and 1 in 2025. When nitazenes are used, the most common route of administration locally is by smoking.

San Diego, CA: Annick Bórquez, PhD

Most recent mortality data show 2 drug-related deaths involving nitazenes: 1 in 2024 and 1 in 2025. Nitazenes have not been identified using the FTIR in drug checking samples over the past several months, but they are difficult to identify due to their very low concentration given their high potency. The Los Angeles FTIR drug checking program detected nitazenes (isotonitazepyne) in December 2025, in 2 counterfeit M30 pills. Those intentionally using nitazenes may be purchasing them on the dark web. During outreach, community groups have also been testing for nitazenes using test strips and have had some positives in fentanyl samples. Some of those samples also tested positive for medetomidine. Participants reported psychedelic effects, feeling like they were floating, or "riding the line" [between life and death] and finding it much more difficult to wake up. They reported the drugs were sold as "hit it or quit it" or "fentanyl 2.0". A note of caution: Dr. Chelsea Shover from the LA drug checking program shared that a few fentanyl samples had tested positive using nitazene test strips in the field were ruled out at the lab with confirmatory testing, and that false positives may be correlated with the presence of metamizole. There is no indication of widespread presence of nitazenes in Southern California.

Nebraska: Patrick Habecker, PhD

At this time, there is no confirmed evidence indicating that nitazenes are present in the local drug supply. Members of our study cohort have reported experiencing unusual effects while using methamphetamine; however, these reports are currently attributed to fentanyl exposure. Wastewater surveillance data from Lincoln indicates a consistent pattern of fentanyl detection throughout December and January following a prior period absence.

Chicago, IL: Mary Mackesy-Amiti, PhD

Among opioid-involved overdose deaths in Cook County, nitazenes detection peaked at ~ 8% in late 2024 - early 2025. Following a decline to ~ 4%, the presence of nitazenes increased again to ~ 6% during Q4 of 2025. In 2025, fentanyl was detected in 60% of nitazene involved cases, while 44% co- occurred with cocaine; 22% contained both fentanyl and cocaine, and 17% contained neither substance. An increased presence of nitazenes has been observed in drug-checking samples between November - December 2025, 18 of 146 samples (12%) tested positive for nitazenes vs. approximately 5% during May-June. Most detections (n=17) were identified using test strips, while only 3 were detected through FTIR analysis.

Minnesota: Nate Wright, PhD, MPH

No information to report at this time.

Texas: Dayong Lee, PhD

The September 2025 Houston HIDTA report on the rising threat of nitazenes, noted 4 deaths involving nitazenes, specifically *N*-pyrrolidino protonitazene, in Harris County in January-August, 2025. The Seized Drugs section of Houston Forensic Science Center received nitazene-positive drug materials, mostly *N*-pyrrolidino protonitazene except for one case of protodesnitazene, as recently as October 2025. Most samples contained *N*-pyrrolidino protonitazene, with one case involving protodesnitazene. These materials were initially suspected to be oxycodone or oxymorphone tablets but were later identified as nitazenes. According to the Houston HIDTA report, the source of nitazenes in Houston remains largely unknown, though most products are believed to have been obtained online. Nitazenes are not included in routine toxicology testing scopes in many laboratories.

Florida: Bruce Goldberger, PhD

There has been a notable decline the number of nitazene findings in decedents and seized drugs statewide.

Ohio: Kelley Kampman, PhD

Current trends indicate that nitazenes are present across the state, though currently detected in relatively low prevalence. Crime laboratories have identified several nitazene compounds, including ethylene etonitazene, isotonitazene, methylenedioxynitazene, metonitazene, *N*-desethyl etonitazene, *N*-desethyl isotonitazene, *N*-pyrrolidino etonitazene, *N*-pyrrolidino protonitazene, protonitazene. In October 2025, Governor DeWine signed an executive order decriminalizing the possession and use of test strips and reagent kits designed to detect xylazine, medetomidine, and nitazenes. This policy change was implemented to improve public health response efforts across the state.

New York City, NY: Ellenie Tuazon, MPH

We have detected isotonitazene or pro/isotonitazene in drug-checking.

Philadelphia, PA: Jeanmarie Perrone, MD

No information to report at this time.

Washington, DC: Lisa Wiederlight, MPP

No information to report at this time.

Kentucky: Sarah Hargrove, MS

In 2024-2025, we had a decline in nitazene-related fatal overdoses. Partner emergency departments have seen low number of nonfatal nitazene-related encounters. A syringe drug checking program in the state has detected nitazenes in very small prevalences in late 2025.

St. Louis, MO: Heidi Israel, PhD, FNP, LCSW, CCRG

No information to report at this time.

Atlanta, GA: Matt Myers, MS, MPA

State laboratory seized drug analyses during the last 6-months of 2025 identified 1 nitazene related finding (*N*-desethyl isotonitazene). Anecdotal reports from law enforcement narcotics investigators suggest no known presence of nitazenes in the drug supply over approximately the past year, and overall awareness appears low. When previously detected, nitazenes were reportedly encountered primarily as adulterants in substance believed to be fentanyl.

Response Key	
	Response indicates recent signal related to drug
	Response indicates no recent signal related to drug

NDEWS is funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse to the University of Florida (MPI: Cottler (contact), Co-Is: Goldberger, Nixon, Striley), NYU Langone Health (MPI: Palamar), and Florida Atlantic University (Co-I: Barenholtz).
Recommended citation: National Drug Early Warning System (NDEWS). Sentinel Site Director Report - January (2026). Retrieved from https://ndews.org.