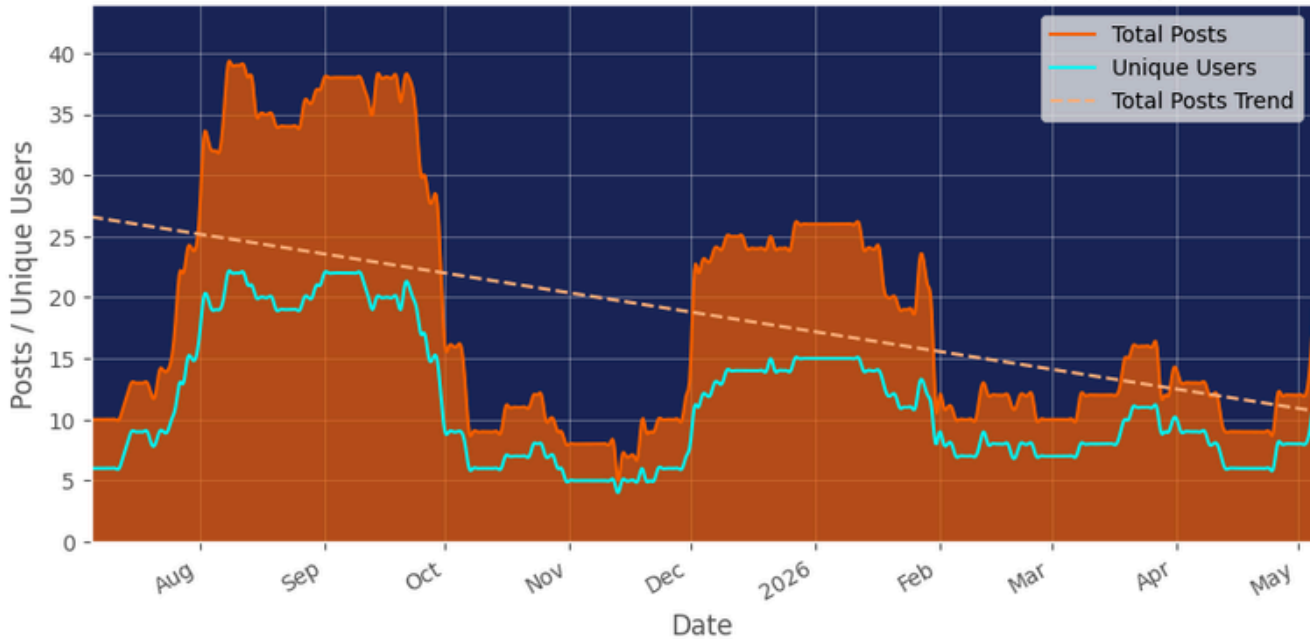


## Alert from the NDEWS Web Monitoring Team Reddit mentions of Medetomidine

Sum of Medetomidine Reddit posts/unique users in a rolling 60-day window



**Why are we reporting on this?** Medetomidine has continued to appear in online discussions amid concerns about its presence as an adulterant in the unregulated opioid supply. Reddit discussions reveal concerning patterns regarding its role as a potent non-opioid sedative added to fentanyl. Although opioid overdose reversal medications like naloxone should still be administered (as opioids are involved in most medetomidine overdoses), medetomidine may complicate overdose response with commenters highlighting difficulty managing overdoses, in addition to severe life-threatening complications during withdrawal.

**What is Medetomidine?** Medetomidine is a potent alpha-2 adrenergic agonist traditionally used in veterinary medicine for sedation and analgesia. It has increasingly appeared as a highly potent illicit drug additive, serving as a replacement or companion to xylazine in fentanyl mixtures.

### Previous NDEWS Web Monitoring Reports:

- [February 13, 2026](#)
- [April 11, 2025](#)
- [June 14, 2024](#)

**Public Health Impacts:** Reddit discussants report significant adverse effects associated with medetomidine exposure, including profound and sudden sedation, severe dry mouth, extreme dizziness upon standing, and intense hot flashes. Commenters frequently describe experiencing vivid, terrifying hallucinations and acute psychological distress shortly after administration. Multiple discussants note severe physiological complications such as extreme edema in the lower extremities that severely impairs mobility, acute gastrointestinal distress, and fluid retention around vital organs. Furthermore, abrupt cessation is reported to trigger complex withdrawal syndromes characterized by dangerously severe chest pains, heart palpitations, migraines, and intense 'brain zaps'.

**How is it Being Discussed?** Reddit commenters believe that medetomidine is rapidly spreading through the domestic drug supply, noting that it frequently adulterates fentanyl and heroin without the knowledge of consumers. There is frequent discussion regarding the challenges of detection, with discussants sharing experiences where substances tested negative on standard xylazine test strips but later proved positive for medetomidine through advanced drug checking methods like fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy and gas chromatography-mass spectrometry. Discussants actively seek advice on the accuracy of new rapid test strips to mitigate the long turnaround times of laboratory testing. The drug is consistently discussed in the context of minimizing harms associated with substance use, with commenters sharing the difficulties that outreach programs and medical staff face due to a widespread lack of clinical protocol for medetomidine withdrawal. The substance is discussed alongside other unregulated and/or alternative substances, including fentanyl analogs, xylazine, methadone, gabapentin, and kratom.