

Nitazenes pose a high risk of overdose, hospitalisation and death.

Nitazenes are a group of synthetic opioids that have been widely detected in all parts of Scotland. Different types have been identified. Some are hundreds of times stronger than heroin.

Nitazenes are most commonly found as a contaminant in drugs sold as heroin, benzodiazepines and oxycodone. Some examples are shown in the photos below.



Overdose

Overdose can happen quickly and unexpectedly. Overdose signs might include:

- being unresponsive (will not wake when shaken)
- snoring or noisy breathing
- blue or pale lips and skin
- seizures or fits.

In an emergency

- Stay calm, call 999 and ask for an ambulance.
- Give as much information as you can about what was taken.
- Stay with the person.

Naloxone

- Naloxone is a medicine that can temporarily reverse opioid overdose. It should be given to anyone who is unresponsive and showing overdose signs.
- Naloxone can reverse the effects of nitazenes, but repeat doses may be needed. Doses should be given one at a time, two to three minutes apart.

Harm reduction

Follow opioid harm reduction advice, with greater caution due to the risk of contamination:

- Use drugs in the company of other people, and take turns to dose.
- Avoid mixing drugs knowingly, including alcohol and medicines.
- Dose low and go slow. Take a smaller amount than you usually would and leave a long gap in between doses.
- Get naloxone from your local drug service or order from www.sfad.org.uk
- Find support at www.scottishdrugservices.com

To find out more, visit

publichealthscotland.scot/RADAR



Alert number: 2025/21

Version: V1.0

Release date: 12 August 2025

Photo credit: WEDINOS