Nitazenes Fact Sheet

What Are Nitazenes?

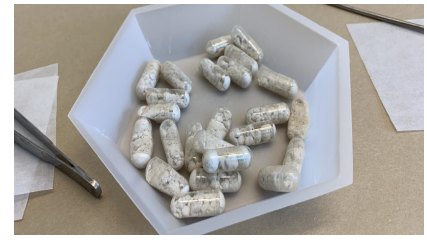
- **Labeled as the "Frankenstein Opioid" due to its strong effects.**
- **Street name ISO, slang names oni**
- Nitazenes are potent synthetic opioids from a drug class known as benzimidazole-opioids.
- Some nitzenes are estimated to be several times more potent than fentanyl.
- They were developed 60 years ago as potential pain relief medication, but were never approved for clinical use.
- They were first identified in the unregulated drug supply in America in 2019.
- Nitazenes are very strong drugs that may cause overdose even if just a small amount is smoked, snorted, injected, or taken orally.

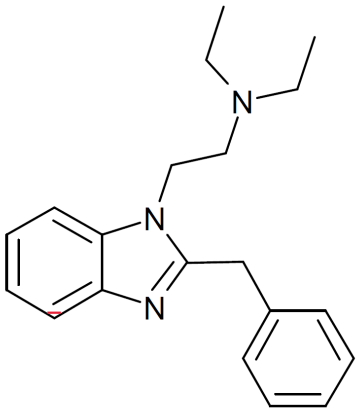
Examples of nitazenes:

- Etodesnitazene
- Etonitazene
- Etonitazepyne
- Flunitazene
- Isotonitazene
- Metonitazene
- Protonitazene
- 5-Aminoisotonitazene

Why They Are a Concern

- The presence of nitazenes in the unregulated drug supply is rising. The frequency with which they are detected is increasing, but there is also an increasing number of nitazene analogs.
- They tend to be used unintentionally and in unknown quantities because the contents of drugs from the unregulated supply are unpredictable.
- One of the biggest dangers with these drugs is that they may not be sold as a nitazene. They typically appear unexpectedly in drugs expected to contain other, more traditional opioids (e.g., fentanyl, oxycodone tablets or "down"), often alongside non-medical benzodiazepines (NMBs) as well as illicitly-sold marijuana.
- Nitazenes can increase the risk of accidental overdose, especially when combined with other substances that suppress breathing and heart rate such as other opioids or benzodiazepines.
- Overdoses involving nitazenes may be difficult to reverse, potentially requiring additional doses of naloxone, but protocols around this are not yet clear.
- Fentanyl test strips cannot detect nitazenes, and detection of nitazenes by point-of-service drug checking requires sensitive equipment that is not always available.
- Nitazenes are not routinely tested for in post-mortem or urine toxicology, so their relationship to health risks and overdose deaths is difficult to monitor.
- Naloxone is a key harm reduction tool for reversing overdoses involving opioids. However, it is unclear what the appropriate naloxone response is to reverse an overdose involving a nitazene.





According to the DEA,
two milligrams of fentanyl can constitute a lethal dose.
ISO's toxicity can be considerably higher.

Benzimidazole Opioids	Compared to fentanyl	Compared to morphine
Etonitazene	50x greater	1000x greater
Protonitazene	1.7 to 1.29x greater	130x greater
Isotonitazene	Roughly equal	2.5x greater