

Drug alerts are effective in increasing actions to protect against potential harms

Mary Ellen Harrod
NSW Users and AIDS Association

Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands where our offices are located, the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation and Traditional Owners of Country throughout New South Wales where we live and work. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded, and this always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

NUAA acknowledges the legacy of peers who went before and recognises the courage and commitment of the (injecting) drug user activists that played a key role in preventing HIV in Australia. We commit to holding their legacy and continuing the fight for the health, human rights and dignity of diverse communities of people who use and have used drugs.

NUAA has collaborated with NSW Health to issue public drug alerts since 2018

- Committee participation: help to determine whether the alert will be issued and review wording
- Issue alert via NUAA social media channels (NUAA and DWNSW Instagram and Facebook)
- Follow up with further harm reduction (e.g. naloxone distribution, liaising with other community organisations)

DRUG WARNING

High dose MDMA (ecstasy) tablets have recently been found in NSW – purple shield-shaped tablets

The purple shield-shaped tablets contain 150mg of MDMA. This is a higher dose than usually expected.

Know the risks

- You are at **increased risk of harm** if you:
 - Take multiple MDMA (ecstasy) tablets or capsules
 - Take a higher-dose MDMA tablet or capsule
 - Use other stimulant drugs (e.g. amphetamines or cocaine) at the same time
 - Take MDMA in a hot environment like a music



These pills contain a higher dose than usually expected in MDMA pills circulating in NSW.... See more



NSW Drug Warning

HIGH DOSE MDMA (ECSTASY) PURPLE "SHIELD" PILLS CIRCULATING IN NSW



NSW Drug Warning

HIGH DOSE MDMA (ECSTASY) PILLS

High dose MDMA pills recently detected in NSW. These pills contain a higher dose than usually expected in MDMA pills circulating in NSW. The pills are purple coloured and come in a shield-like shape*. The pills contain 150mg of MDMA.

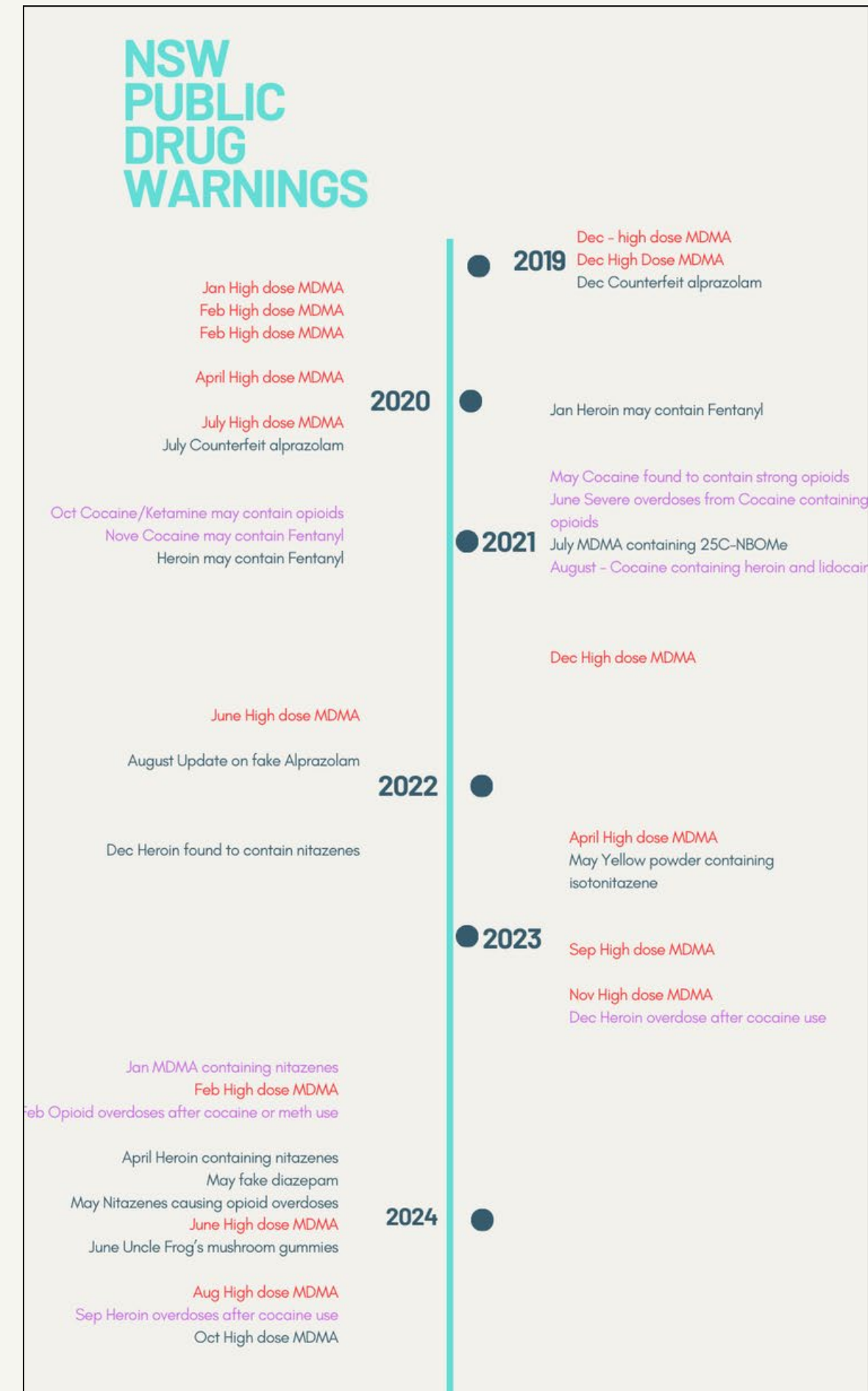
- MDMA pills and caps are often poorly made and the MDMA dose can vary, even within the same batch.
- Always start low, with a half or quarter if taking pills or caps, regardless of how familiar you are with a substance.

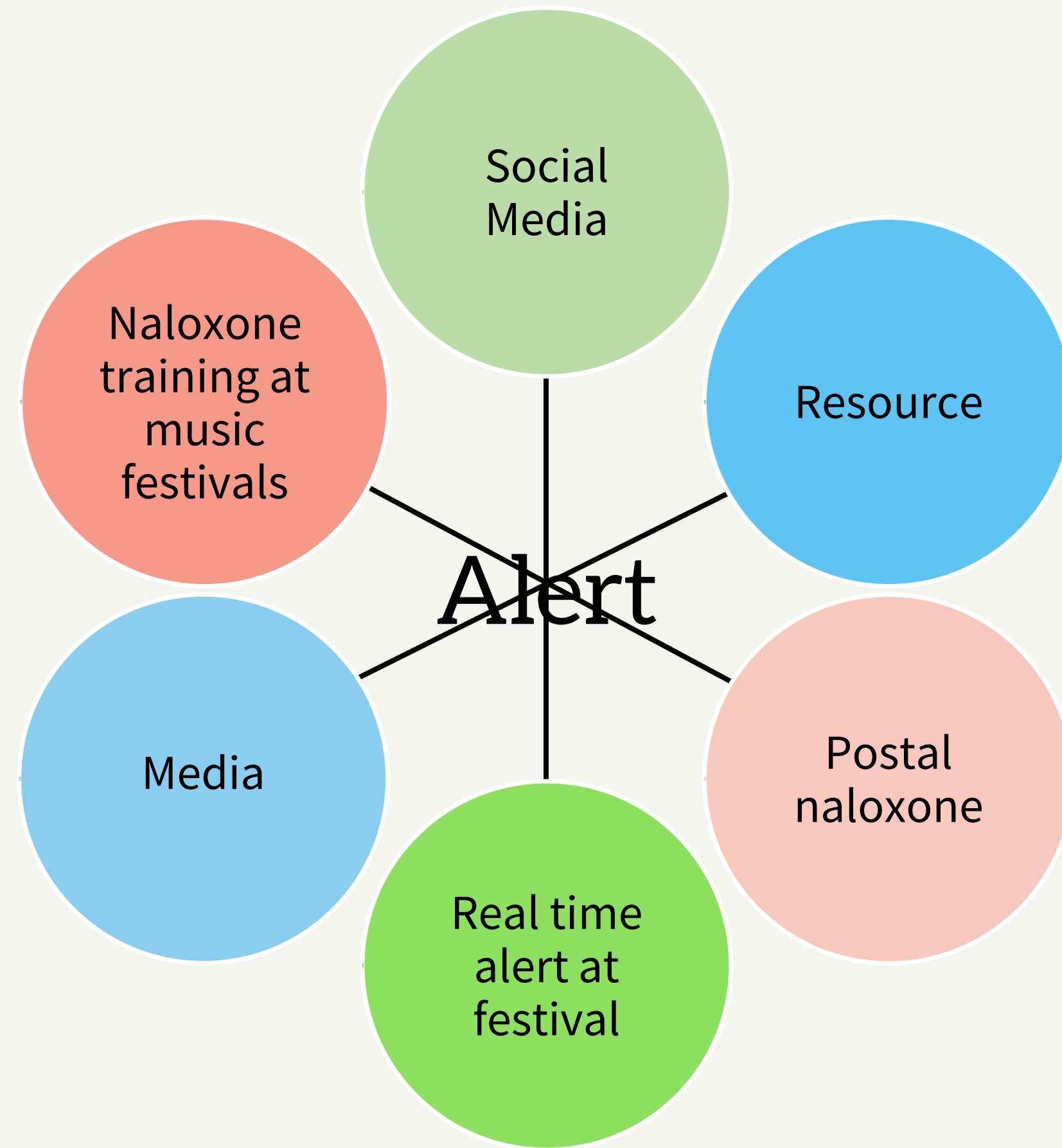
*Tablet appearance is not a reliable indicator of drug contents.

Drug Alerts Issued Since 2019

- 15 High-dose MDMA alerts (Red)
- 9 Stimulants containing opioids alerts (purple)
- 13 Additional alerts

37 Total





Drug alerts on social media

“Peer alerts” including explicit harm reduction information issues via NUAA and DanceWize NSW social media channels (Instagram and FaceBook)


DanceWize NSW
2 October at 15:56 · 🌐

⚠️ HIGH DOSE MDMA TABLETS FOUND IN NSW ⚠️

The purple shield-shaped pills are circulating in NSW.

These pills contain a higher dose than usually expected in MDMA pills circulating in NSW.... See more



NSW Drug Warning

HIGH DOSE MDMA (ECSTASY)

PURPLE “SHIELD” PILLS

CIRCULATING IN NSW





NSW Drug Warning

HIGH DOSE MDMA (ECSTASY) PILLS

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- Always start low, with a half or quarter if taking pills or caps, regardless of how familiar you are with a substance.

Source: NSW Health October 2024



NSW Drug Warning

HIGH DOSE MDMA (ECSTASY) PILLS

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR?

- Feeling really hot and sweaty
- Racing pulse/heart or lightheadedness
- Rigid muscles (e.g. difficulty walking)
- Uncontrolled repetitive movements
- Confusion, agitation, paranoia, or aggression.
- Vomiting
- Seizures
- Difficult to rouse/unconscious

Call 000 immediately or seek urgent medical attention.



NSW Drug Warning

HIGH DOSE MDMA (ECSTASY) PILLS

WHAT IS THE RISK?

- Taking MDMA increases the level of serotonin available in your brain, which is what gives the drug its ‘feel-good’ effects.
- Too much serotonin available in your brain can be harmful, and lead to Serotonin Syndrome.
- Serotonin Syndrome can be fatal, and has been a factor in some of the MDMA-related deaths at NSW music festivals.

Call 000 immediately or seek urgent medical attention.



NSW Drug Warning

HIGH DOSE MDMA (ECSTASY) PILLS

REDUCE YOUR RISK FACTORS

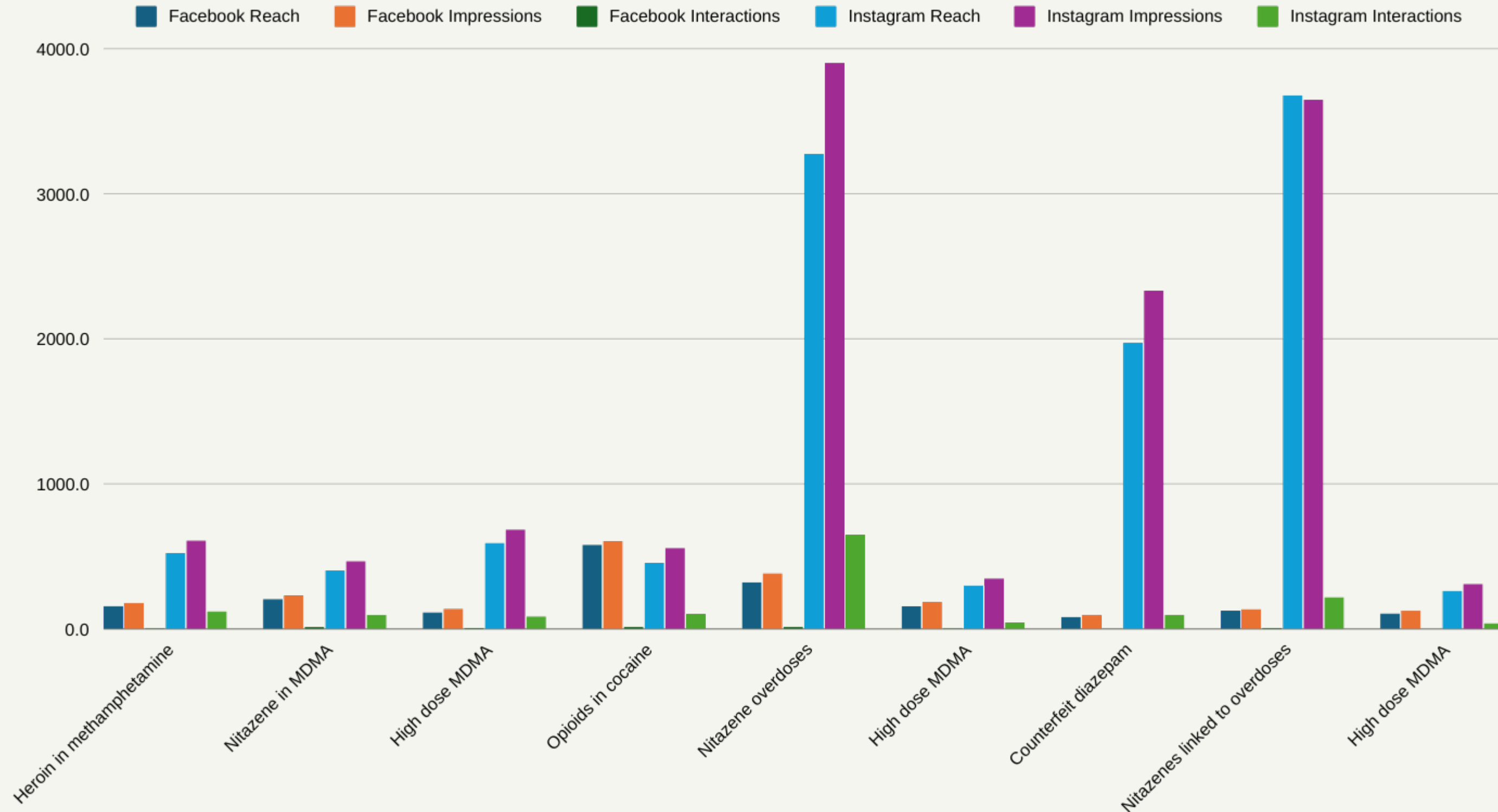
You can reduce risk by avoiding:

- redosing too often, or taking multiple MDMA tablets at once.
- rolling with other stimulants (e.g. methamphetamine, cocaine and caffeine).
- using MDMA with anti-depressants.
- taking MDMA in hot environments (e.g. music festivals, raves, indoor dance parties).

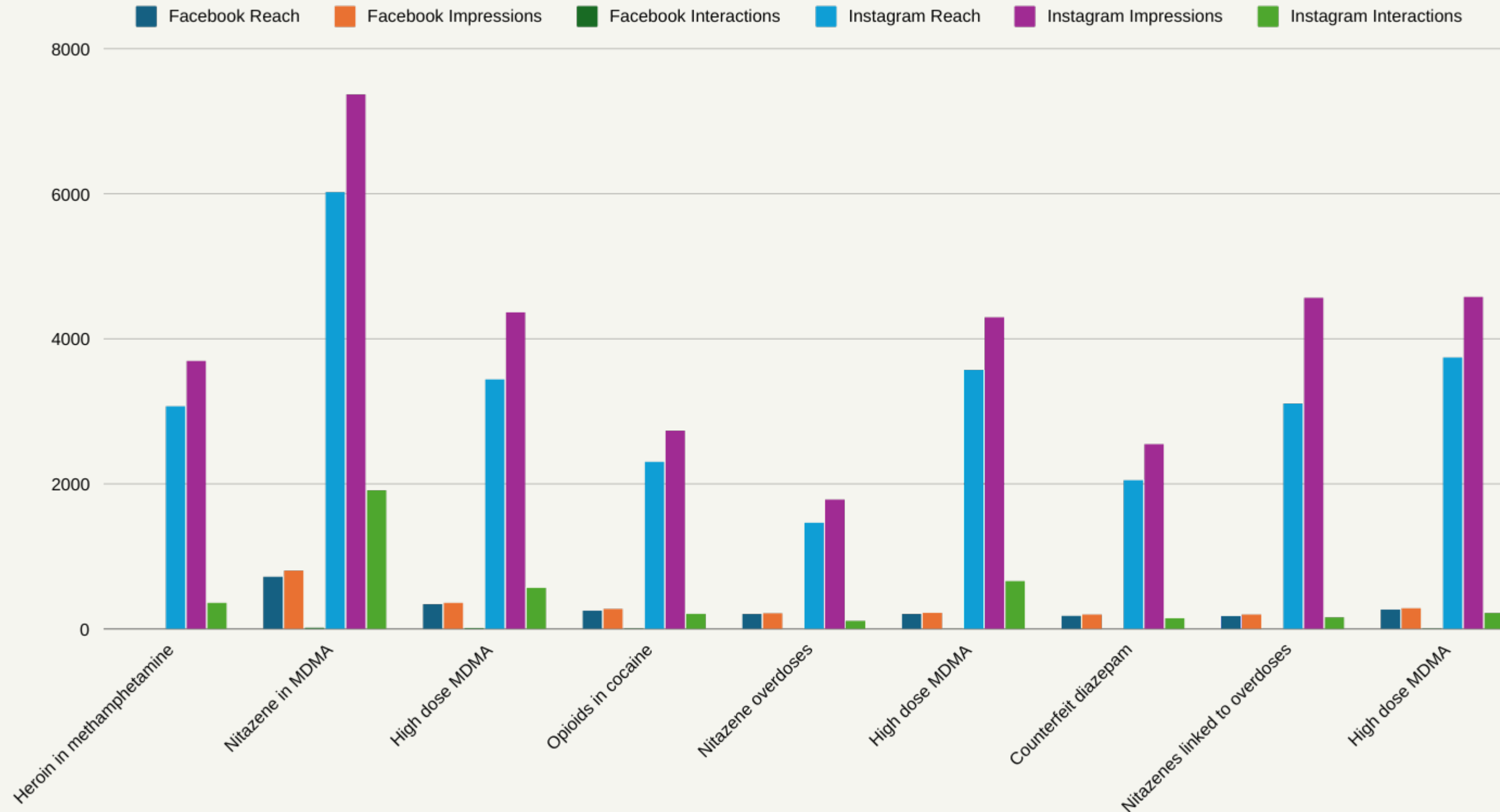
Call 000 if something is wrong.

DanceWize NSW social media

Social media traction - NUAA




Social media traction - DanceWize NSW



Real time festival alert

- A substance sold as **MDMA** was found to contain **Nitazenes** at a NSW music festival in early 2024
- **Onsite stakeholders** collaborated to issue a warning at the festival
- **No lives were lost** – this collaborative response was possible through the NSW music festival response & guidelines years of relationship building within the festival space



Henry Belot


Wed 31 Jan 2024 01:00 AEDT

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When a seriously ill Sydney raver 'set off alarm bells', a DJ stepped in to avert a nightmare scenario

Medical experts at the HTID festival at Olympic Park realised a dangerous synthetic opioid was circulating and acted fast to save lives

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MDMA, or ecstasy pills. A drug circulating among the crowd at the HTID festival in Sydney on Saturday night was found to contain traces of nitazenes and no MDMA. Photograph: Westmacott/Alamy

Media coverage of live drug alert

Media coverage has intensified...

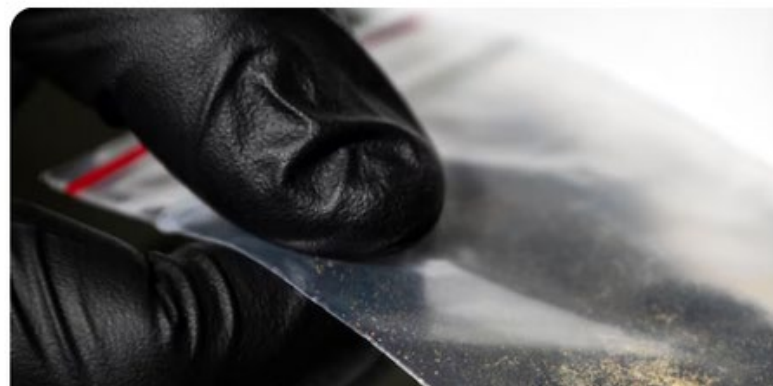
7.30
VIDEO: Nitazenes – The dangerous street drug which is up to 1000 times stronger than morphine

Stronger than fentanyl and heroin: Nitazenes are causing fear amongst Australian law enforcement and medical authorities

By national health reporter Elise Worthington and Richard M...

7.30 Drug and Substance Abuse

Wed 3 Jul



PSA: ARE YOU PREPARED FOR THE DANGERS OF SYNTHETIC OPIOIDS?

Nitazene is incredibly dangerous in low doses, and has been found with increasing regularity in Australia & New Zealand.

Australia World AU politics Environment Climate crisis Indigenous Australia Immigration Me...

Health

This article is more than 3 months old

Mushroom gummies: powerful cannabis product could have caused 'disturbing hallucinations' and hospitalisations



Nitazenes: The deadly drug a thousand times stronger than morphine | 60 Minutes Australia



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16K

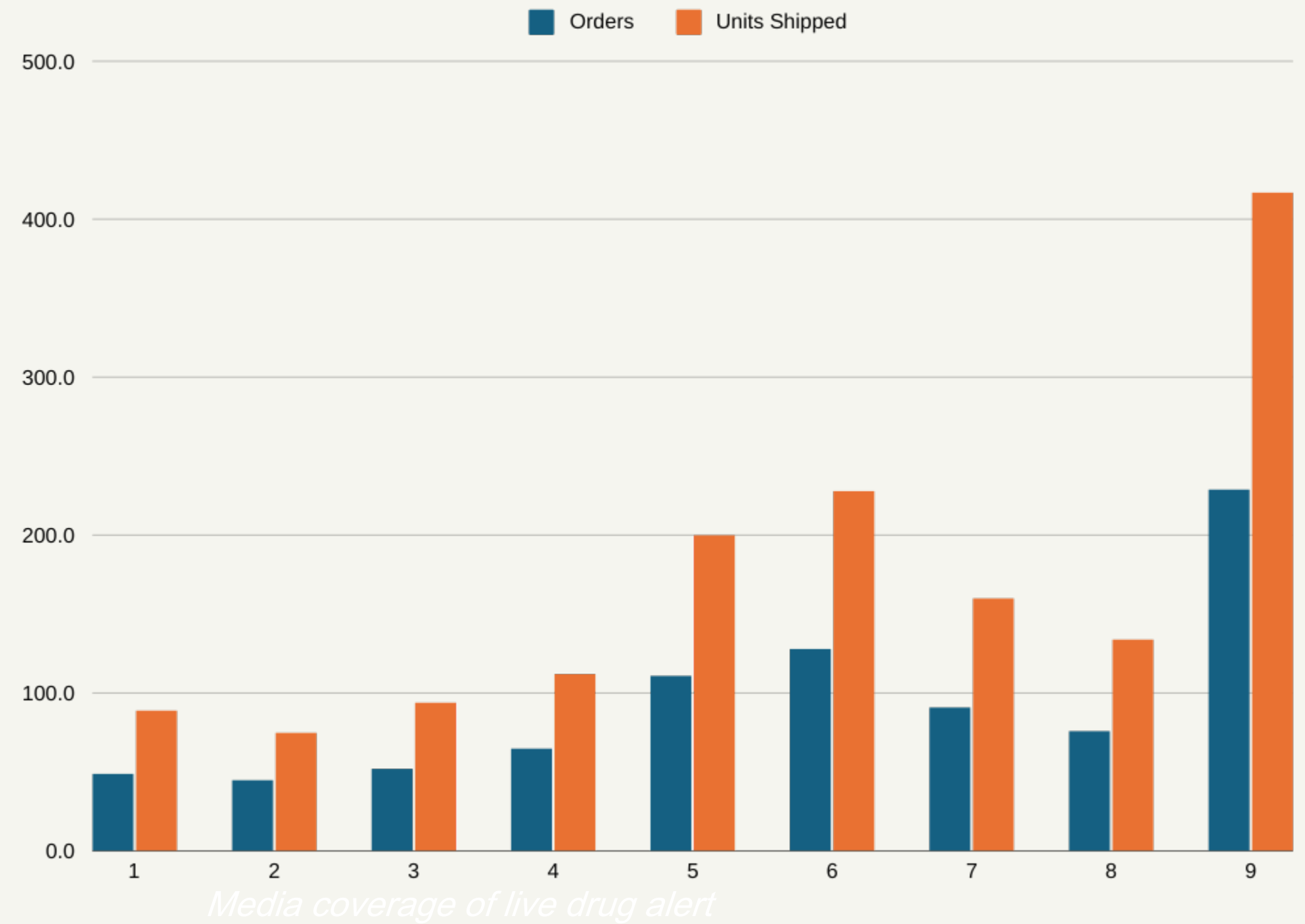


Share



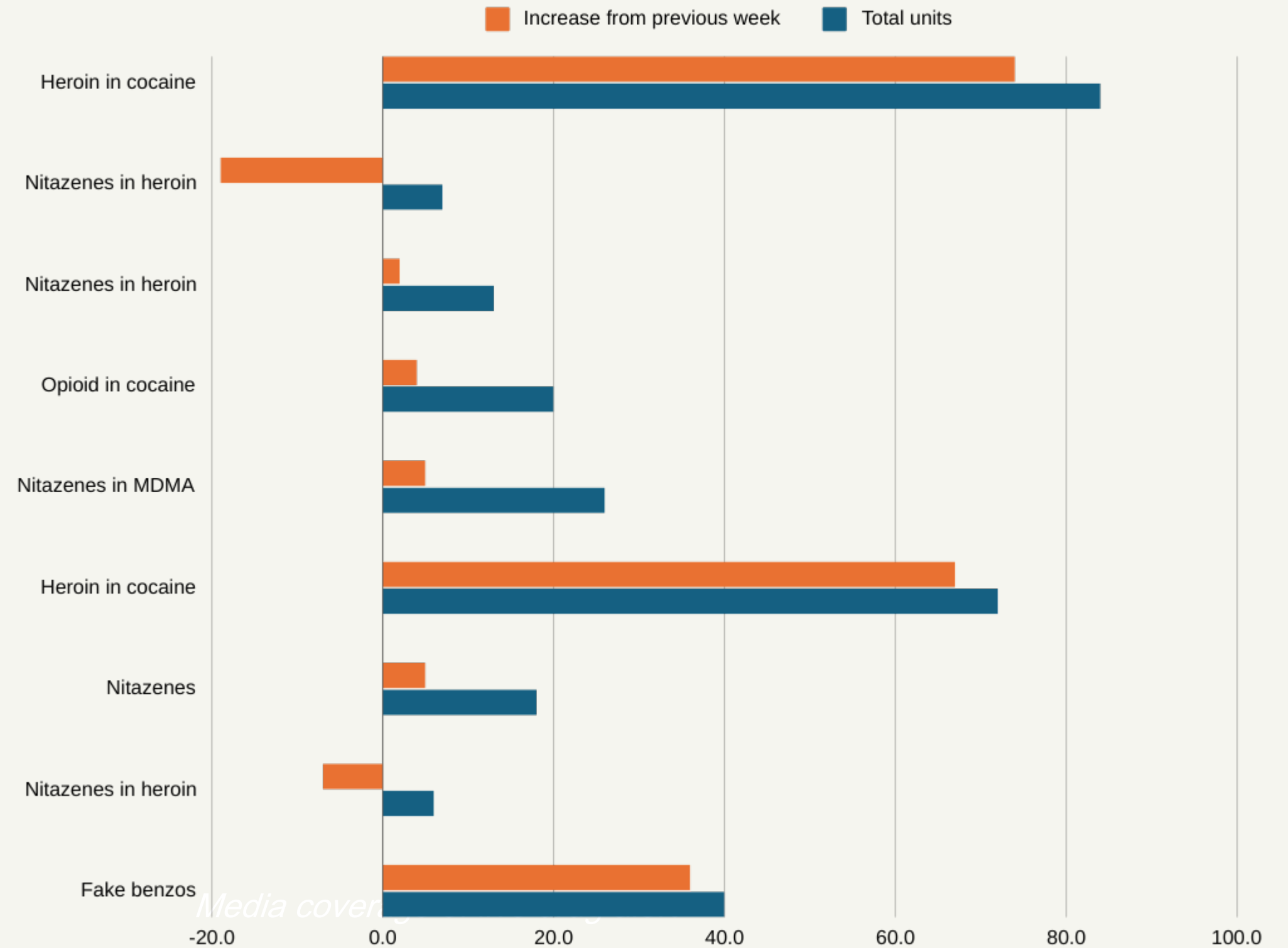
Naloxone orders have increased...

- NUAA commenced distribution of naloxone via the NSW Take Home Naloxone (THN) program in 2022
- Distribution has steadily increased to over 400 units per quarter (postal only)



... alerts drive up Naloxone orders

- Orders tend to increase post alerts for opioids in cocaine
- *Limited data set*





Thank you

www.nuaa.org.au

www.usersnews.org.au

www.dancewizensw.org.au

