



State of Illinois
Illinois Department of Public Health



Statewide Semiannual Overdose Report

June 2024

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported a reduction in the number of drug overdose fatalities in the United States in 2023 from an estimated 111,029 in 2022 to an estimated 107,543.¹ Illinois-specific fatality data is still provisional and will be included in the next semiannual report.

Data from emergency departments (ED) and emergency medical services (EMS) show a similar decreasing trend. While exhibiting a seasonality of monthly increases in the spring and summer, the 12-month rolling average of ED and EMS opioid overdose-related cases shows an overall decrease through March 2024 (Fig. 1).

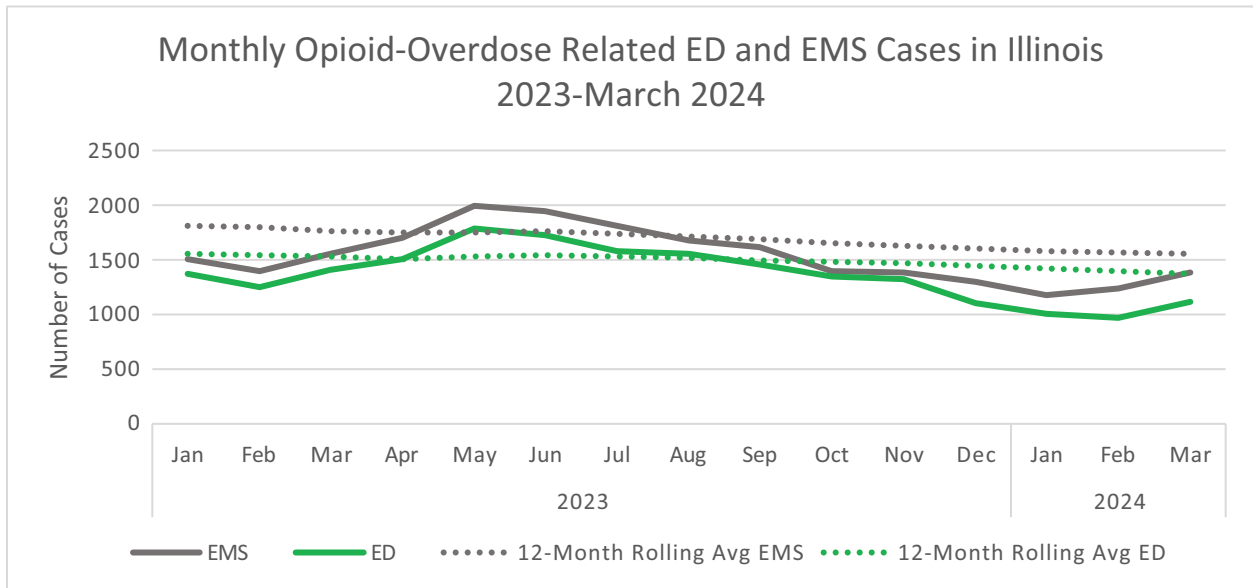


Figure 1. Monthly opioid overdose-related ED and EMS cases in Illinois 2023-2024. The dashed lines represent the 12-month rolling average for each. ED visits as reported by IDPH Syndromic Surveillance; EMS encounters reported by IDPH prehospital emergency medical services. The ED and EMS numbers have not been deduplicated and a single overdose incident could be counted in both the ED and EMS data if a person was transported by EMS to an ED.

The most recent ED data from January 2023-March 2024 show a statewide decrease in the number of monthly visits for “All Drug” and “Opioid Overdose” (Fig. 2). “All Drug” ED visits include potential overdoses with any substance, including marijuana, and prescription and over-the-counter medications. When separated by [IDPH Health Region](#) (Fig. 3), all regions showed stable or decreasing trends. (Figs. 4- 9).

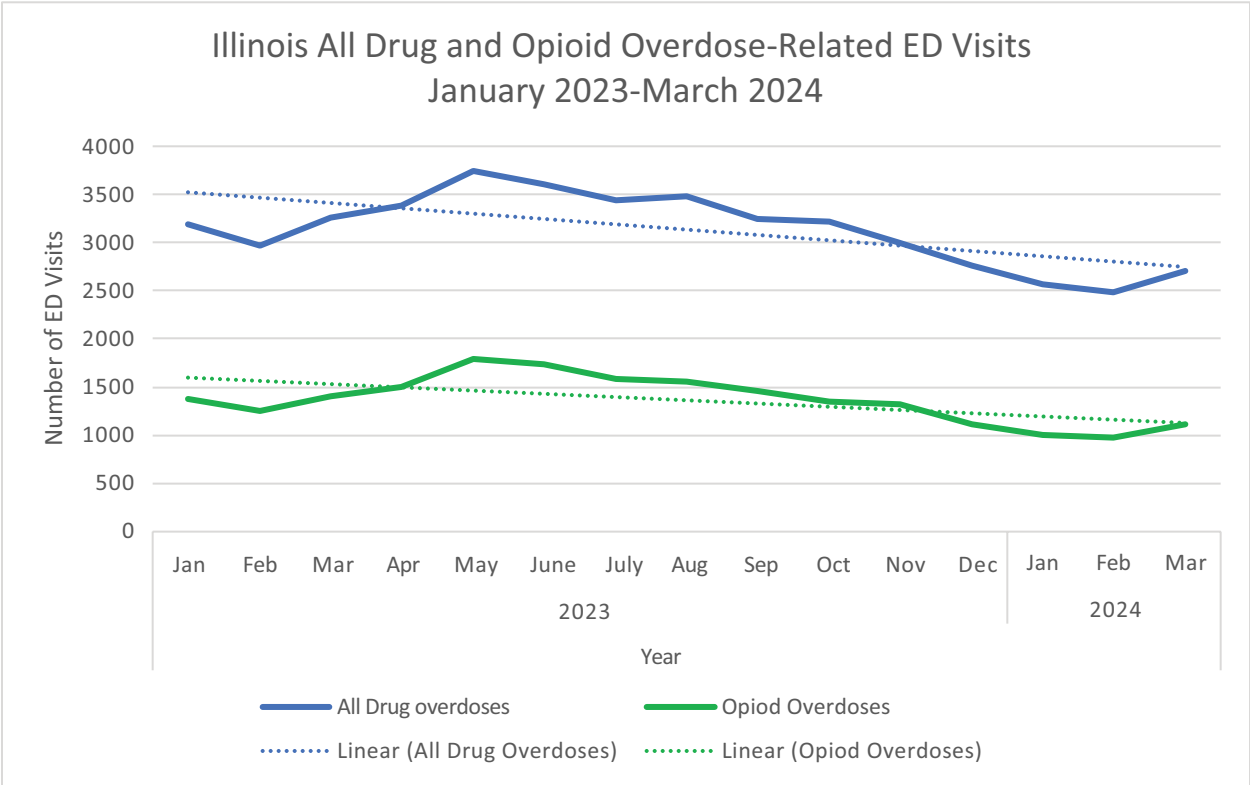


Figure 2. Statewide All Drug and Opioid Overdose-Related ED Visits January 2023-March 2024 as reported by IDPH Syndromic Surveillance

Illinois Department of Public Health - Health Regions

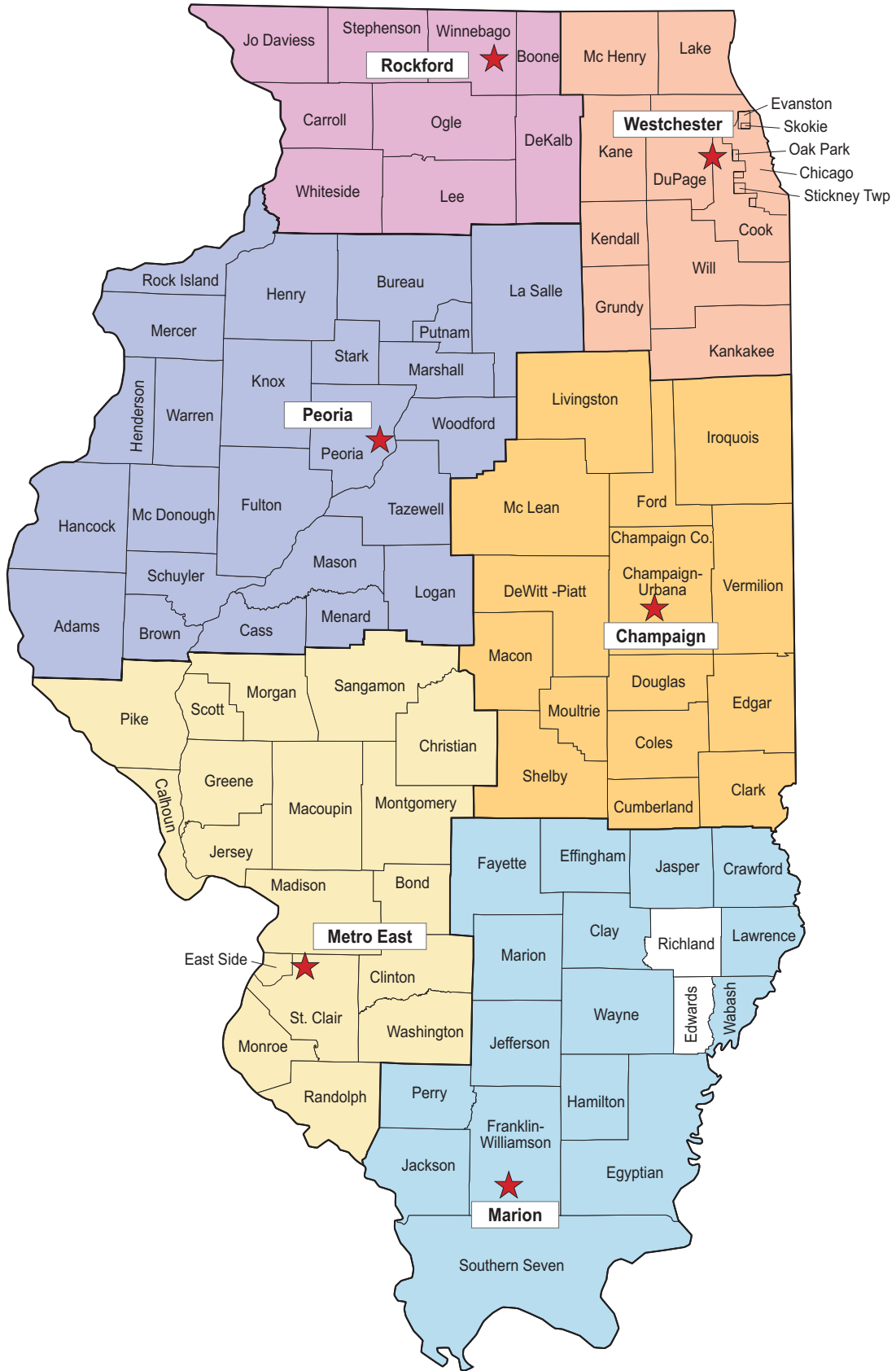


Figure 3. Illinois Department of Public Health Regions

All Drug and Opioid Overdose Monthly ED Visits by IDPH Region, January – March 2024

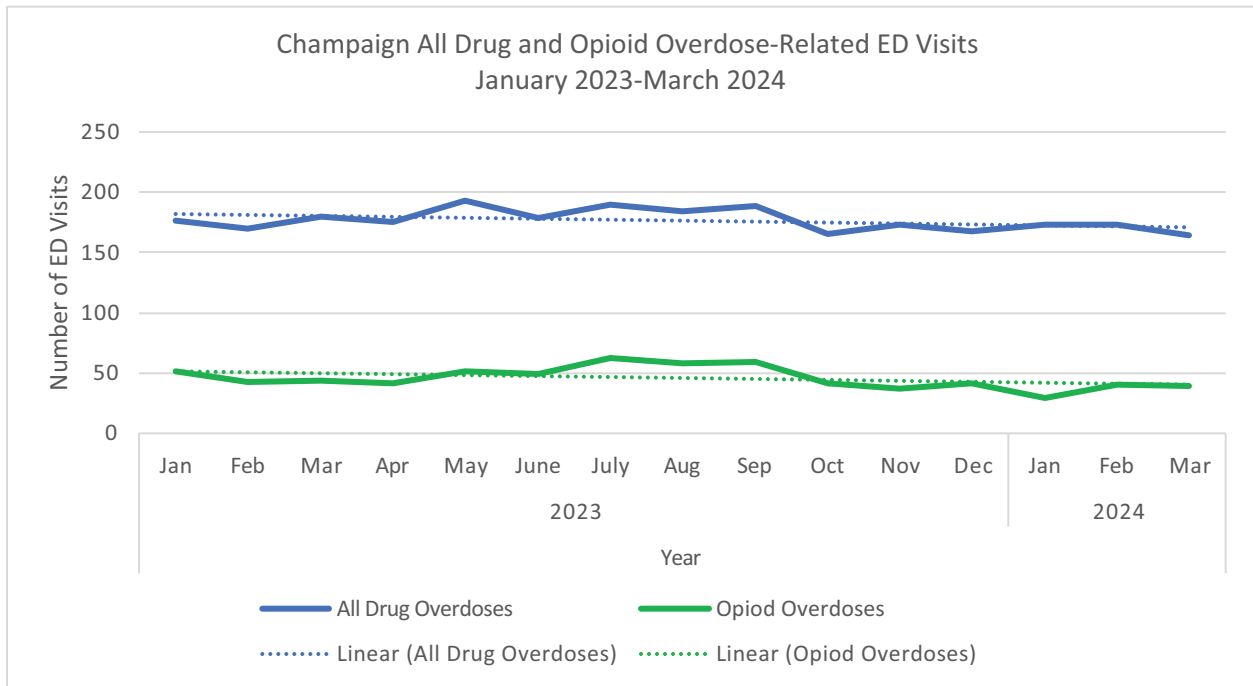


Figure 4. The number of monthly All Drug and Opioid Overdose-Related ED Visits in the Champaign IDPH Region, January 2023 – March 2024, as reported by IDPH Syndromic Surveillance.

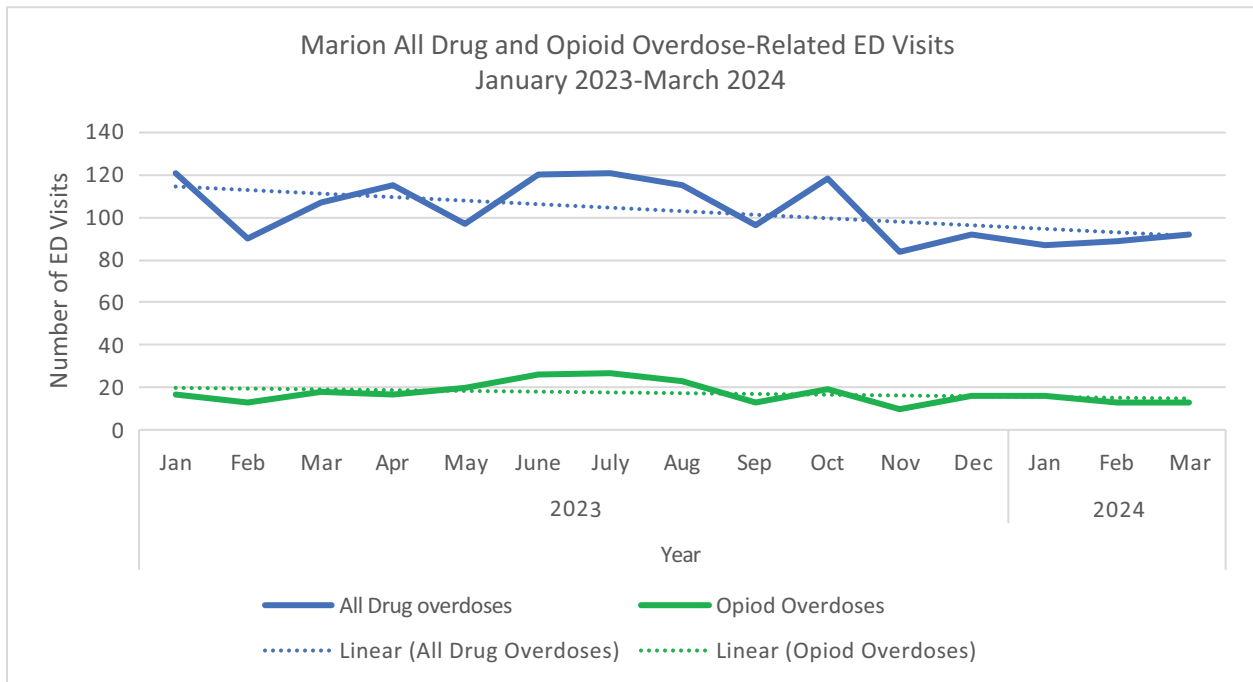


Figure 5. The number of monthly All Drug and Opioid Overdose-Related ED Visits in the Marion IDPH Region, January 2023 – March 2024, as reported by IDPH Syndromic Surveillance.

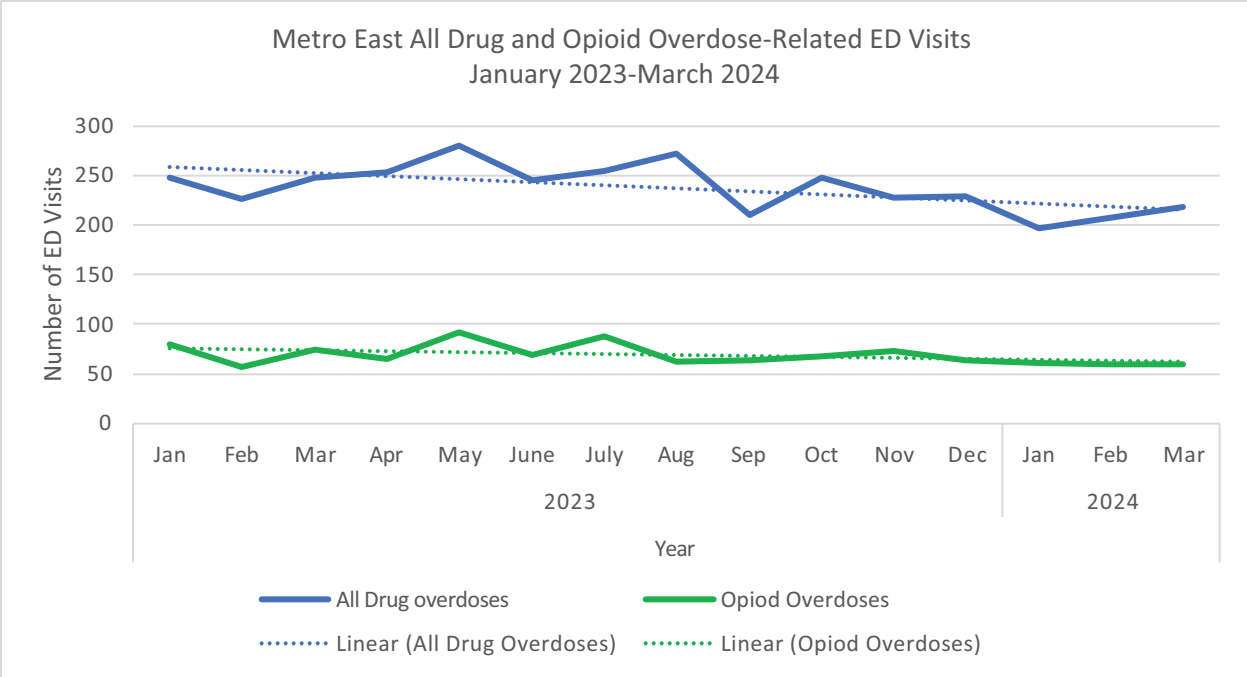


Figure 6. The number of monthly All Drug and Opioid Overdose-Related ED Visits in the Metro East IDPH Region, January 2023 – March 2024, as reported by IDPH Syndromic Surveillance.

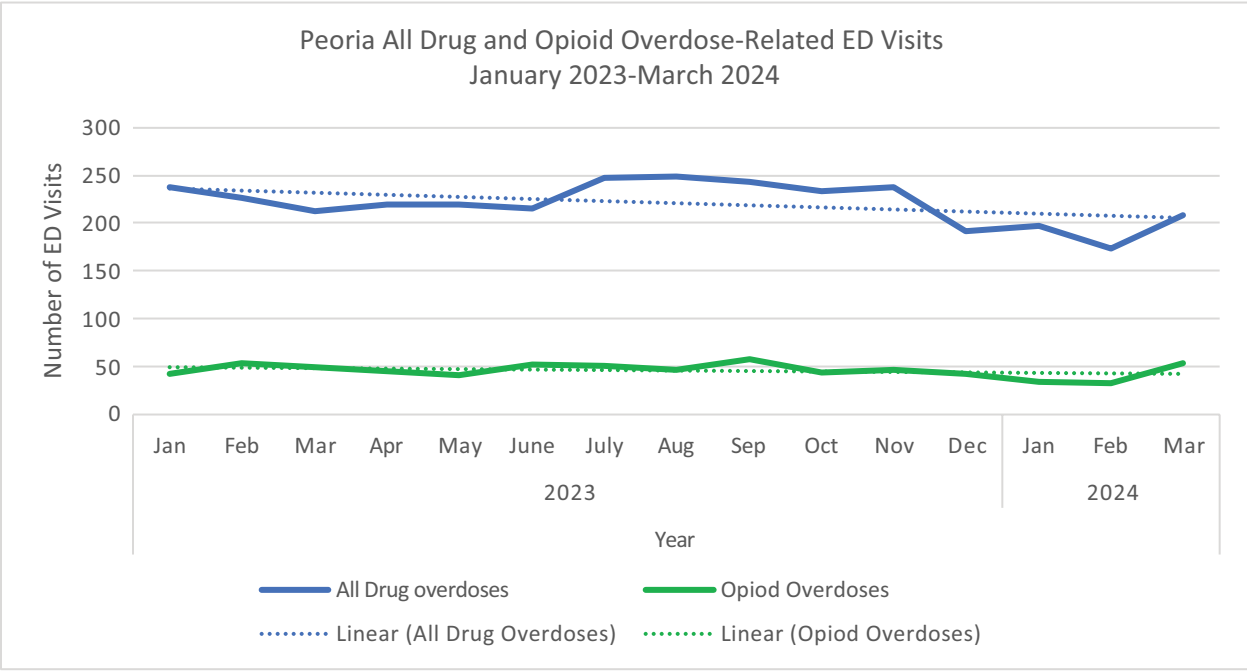


Figure 7. The number of monthly All Drug and Opioid Overdose-Related ED Visits in the Peoria IDPH Region, January 2023 – March 2024, as reported by IDPH Syndromic Surveillance.

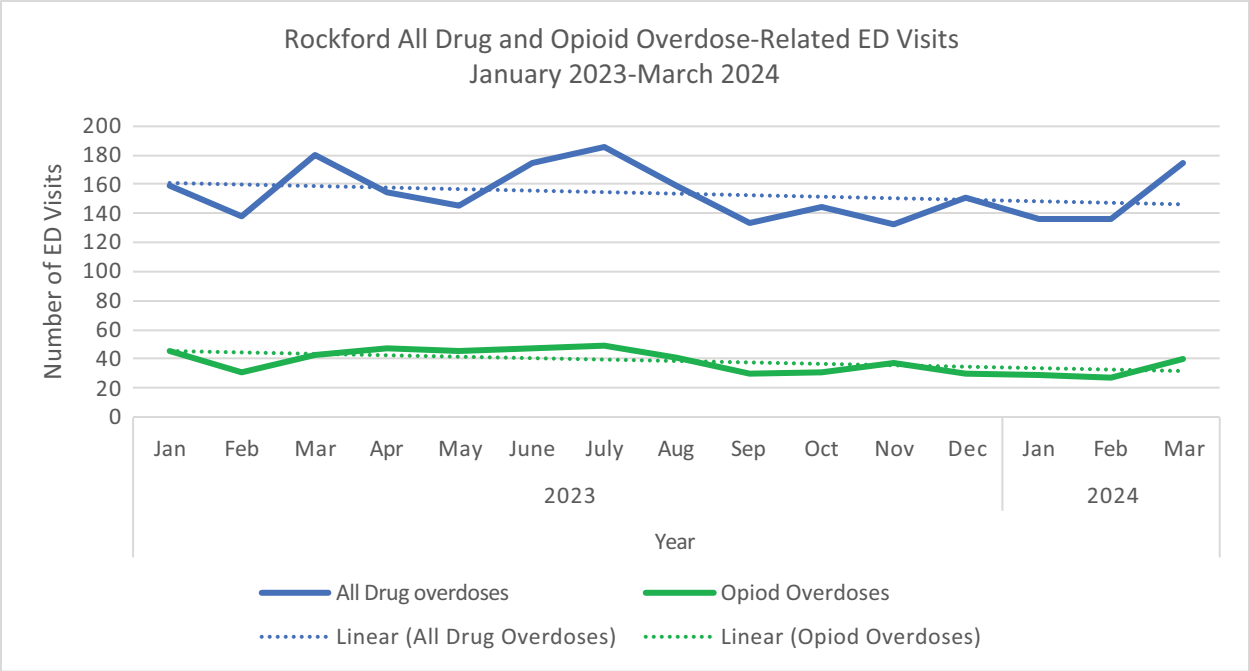


Figure 8. The number of monthly All Drug and Opioid Overdose-Related ED Visits in the Rockford IDPH Region, January 2023 – March 2024, as reported by IDPH Syndromic Surveillance.

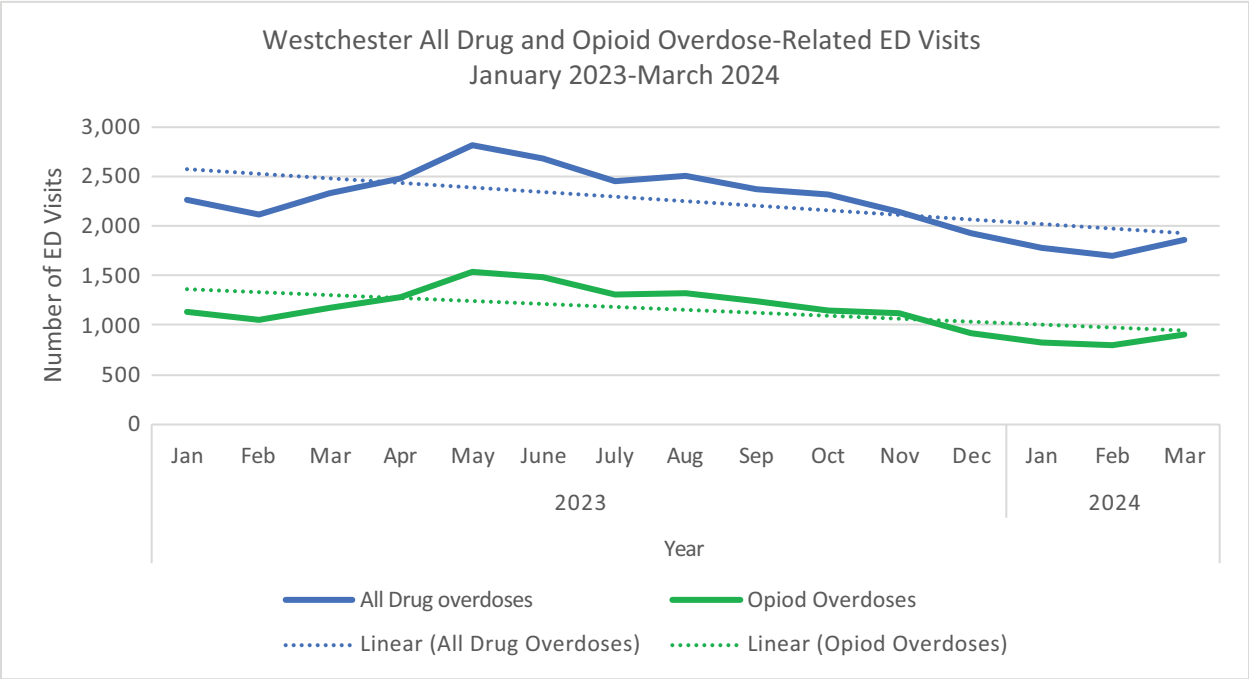


Figure 9. The number of monthly All Drug and Opioid Overdose-Related ED Visits in the Westchester IDPH Region, January 2023 – March 2024, as reported by IDPH Syndromic Surveillance.

Medetomidine

On May 11, 2024, IDPH was notified that multiple individuals had presented at four different hospitals in Cook County with symptoms of opioid overdose but were not responding to naloxone. Some patients also presented with high blood pressure, slow heart rate, and downward gaze.

Toxicology testing of drug samples identified elevated levels of medetomidine, in addition to fentanyl, heroin, xylazine, alprazolam, and nitazenes in the same samples.² Medetomidine is a new adulterant in the Illinois drug supply. Currently, in Illinois, it has only been identified in Cook County. Nationally, since 2022, it has been identified sporadically across different states.³

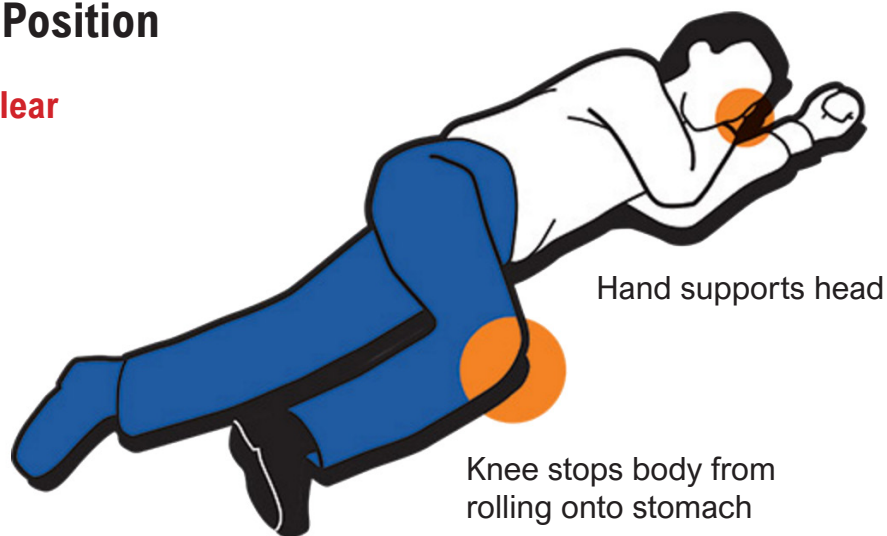
Medetomidine is a potent non-opioid veterinary sedative and is not approved for use in humans. Similar to xylazine, medetomidine is an alpha-2-adrenergic agonist and causes profound sedation. Naloxone will not reverse the effects of medetomidine. However, naloxone administration is still recommended for illegal/non-medical drug exposure because medetomidine is almost always found in combination with opioids.⁴ The sedative effects are strong, and the person may not become fully alert with naloxone. If the person is breathing, they do not need more naloxone. It is recommended that the person is in a recovery position and watched to ensure their safety (Fig. 10).

The use of unregulated substances poses a significant risk of harm. If a person is taking unregulated substances, some precautions can be followed. For example, a user can consider testing the substance for fentanyl using fentanyl test strips. Xylazine test strips are now available and can be used to detect xylazine in substances. Also, the user should carry naloxone and not use substances when they are alone.

If you or a loved one is struggling with substance use, the Illinois Helpline is available at <https://helplineil.org/app/home>, call 833-234-6343, or text "HELP" to 833234. The Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is also available by dialing 988.

The Recovery Position

Keep the Airway Clear



Stay with person. If you must leave them alone at any point, or if they are unconscious, put them in this position to keep airway clear and prevent choking.

Figure 10. The recovery position. Image credit: <https://preventoverdoseri.org/> (<https://preventoverdoseri.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The-Recovery-Position-First-Aid.png>)

References

- ¹ National Center for Health Statistics. 2024. U.S. Overdose Deaths Decrease in 2023, First Time Since 2018. Centers for Disease Control. Accessed 5/22/24. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2024/20240515.htm#:~:text=Provisional%20data%20from%20CDC's%20National,drug%20overdose%20deaths%20since%202018
- ² Chicago Department of Public Health. (2024) Medetomidine in Chicago's Drug Supply. Health Alert. [Alert Detail - HAN \(chicagohan.org\)](#)
- ³ Krotulski, AJ; Shinefeld, J; Moraff, C; Wood, T; Walton, SE; DeBord, JS; Denn, MT; Quinter, AD; Logan, BK. (2024) Medetomidine Rapidly Proliferating Across USA — Implicated In Recreational Opioid Drug Supply & Causing Overdose Outbreaks, Center for Forensic Science Research and Education, United States. [Public Alert Medetomidine 052024.pdf \(cfsre.org\)](#)
- ⁴ Midthun, KM; Mohr, ALA; Browne, T; Logan BK. (2023) [Toxic Adulterant Alert: Medetomidine/Dexmedetomidine, Center for Forensic Science Research and Education, United States \(cfsre.org\)](#)

