

FDA Warns Against “Gas Station Heroin”

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a warning in May 2025 to sound the alarm regarding health concerns relating to tianeptine.

Use of tianeptine, dubbed “gas station heroin” because of its availability in convenience stores, vape shops and online sites, is one the rise, and associated with an increasing number of adverse events. The drug is licensed in some countries as an atypical antidepressant with a therapeutic dose of 12.5mg orally 3 times daily, but carries use restrictions and warnings to its drug label regarding risks for addiction in these countries. Tianeptine is not approved or licensed for any use in the US.

Higher doses of tianeptine result in euphoria, reportedly ingested in doses ranging from 50mg to 10,000mg at a time, may result in vomiting, tachycardia, respiratory depression, hypertension, agitation, coma and death. Tianeptine is not scheduled under the Controlled Substances Act, and has not met regulations to be deemed safe as a dietary ingredient. Still, the substance is marketed as a cognitive enhancer or dietary supplement, and may not be detected in routine toxicology screening panels.

Tianeptine is sold under brand names including Neptune’s Fix, Pegasus, Tianaa, Zaza, and TD Red.

Providers are advised to be aware of the existence of tianeptine, be familiar with possible clinical presentations, and ask about use of substances obtained in gas stations or vape shops when screening for typical illicit substance use.

References:

<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-safety-and-availability/fda-warns-consumers-not-purchase-or-use-any-tianeptine-product-due-serious-risks>. Accessed September 9, 2025.

<https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/fda-issues-warning-gas-station-heroin-tianeptine-2025a1000bhh>. Accessed September 9, 2025.