



Official Newsletter of Drug Free Workplaces
July 2026 Vol. 27 No. 7

Published by The Council on Alcohol and Drugs
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Substance misuse affects more than health—it impacts reliability, relationships, and opportunities.

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Understanding the Dangers of Tianeptine (“Gas Station Heroin”)

Tianeptine is a dangerous, highly addictive opioid-like substance that has been showing up in places most people would never expect. Sold in gas stations, convenience stores, vape shops, and smoke shops, it is often marketed as a “dietary supplement,” “mood booster,” or “focus enhancer.” But behind the friendly packaging is a drug that has been linked to serious harm, overdoses, and even death.

In several countries, tianeptine is used as a prescription antidepressant. In the United States, however, it is **not FDA-approved** for any medical use. Because it is unregulated, products containing tianeptine can vary widely in strength and purity, making them especially risky. The FDA and DEA have issued multiple warnings about these products, noting that they are tied to severe health effects and growing numbers of emergency room visits.

Many users refer to tianeptine as **“gas station heroin.”** This nickname reflects both how easy it is to find and how powerfully addictive it can be. Some individuals who have struggled with opioid use report that tianeptine withdrawal can be even harder to overcome than heroin

withdrawal. This is because tianeptine acts on the brain’s opioid receptors, creating strong dependence and intense cravings.

Tianeptine also acts as a **respiratory depressant**, meaning it can slow or stop breathing—especially when taken in high doses or mixed with other substances. This is the same dangerous effect seen with opioids like fentanyl and heroin. If someone appears to be overdosing, **Narcan (naloxone)** should be administered immediately, and emergency medical help should be called. Narcan can temporarily reverse the life-threatening effects of opioid-like drugs, including tianeptine.

Across the country, there is growing momentum to restrict or ban tianeptine. Several states have already taken action, and there is an active effort to classify it as a **Schedule I controlled substance**, the same category as heroin and LSD. This would make it illegal to sell or possess nationwide.

For employees and workplaces, awareness is key. Because tianeptine is sold in everyday retail locations, many people may not realize how dangerous it is. Employers should encourage workers to read labels carefully, avoid unregulated “supplement” products, and seek help if they or someone they know is struggling with substance use.

The FDA has published detailed information on the risks associated with tianeptine, including reports of overdoses and deaths. Staying informed helps keep our workplaces and communities safer.

If you or someone you know needs support, reach out to a healthcare professional or your Employee Assistance Program. No one has to face these challenges alone.

The following suicide prevention information, while provided by the Georgia Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, will also be helpful to those in states other than Georgia. All online resources listed are available to users nationwide.

Anxiety affects over 40 million U.S. adults annually, often triggered by an “amygdala hijack” that releases stress hormones. While professional help is essential—as these tips complement therapeutic interventions—self-management tools can significantly help regulate your nervous system.

Immediate Grounding and Breathing

When overwhelmed, use the 5-4-3-2-1 method: identify five things you see, four things you can feel, three things you hear, two things you smell, and one thing you are looking forward to. Alternatively, try square breathing: inhale, hold, exhale, and hold again for four counts each to restore calm.

Ownership and Self-Soothing

Manage racing thoughts with the “OWN” acronym: Observe thoughts without judgment, identify the root feeling, and negate them with truth. Engage your senses through self-soothing activities like warm baths, music, or therapy putty to anchor yourself in the moment.

Reflective Practice and Boundaries

Maintain a positive log of daily successes and “I am” statements to rewire your perspective. Crucially, set healthy boundaries; remember that “no” is a complete sentence. Protecting your time and energy is a necessary form of self-care.

Rest, Movement, and Nutrition

Prioritize “restorative time” with meditation to balance stress. Support your body with joyful movement, like brief walks, and focus on nutrition. Foods rich in probiotics and tryptophan support gut health, which is responsible for 90% of your serotonin production.

Managing anxiety is a journey. Be patient, celebrate small victories, and remember that you possess the resilience to calm the storm within and lead a peaceful life.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org

To learn more about suicide prevention, visit the DBHDD website at:
<https://dbhdd.georgia.gov/suicide-prevention>.

Or contact the Suicide Prevention Director, Rachael Holloman, at:
rachael.holloman@dbhdd.ga.gov.



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