

# Suspected Opioid Overdoses from Smoking Crack Cocaine

April 9, 2020

A number of overdoses with symptoms consistent with severe opioid overdose were reported among people who smoked crack cocaine in Toronto's downtown, east of Yonge Street, on April 8, 2020. A number of people required hospitalization related to overdose.

Information on what other drugs were contained in the crack cocaine that was consumed is not available at this time. However, previous drug checking analysis results shows that the illicit drug supply is increasingly toxic, and unexpected drugs of concern have been found in it. The more toxic and unpredictable drug supply increases the risk of overdose, including those that are difficult to reverse. The impact of the toxic drug supply is worsened by the community spread of COVID-19.

Suspected opioid overdose-related calls to paramedics continue to be high following significantly higher number of calls in February and March 2020. Data for February and March 2020 is available on the [Toronto Overdose Information System](#).

## Advice for people using drugs:

Try not to use drugs alone. Use a supervised consumption service, if possible. In an overdose situation, **give naloxone, call 911, and stay with the person, keeping a 6 foot distance, until help arrives. COVID-19 is spread by droplets from the nose or mouth.** It is essential that all overdoses get medical attention. A list of supervised consumption services in Toronto is available here: <https://bit.ly/2VzVRYd>

- **Use with someone else and take turns spotting for each other. Stay 6 feet from your buddy** to avoid passing the coronavirus. A buddy system is safer than using alone.
- If you must use alone, try and call someone you know, and have them stay on the phone with you while you use. Tell them your address and keep the door unlocked. They can call 911 if you become unresponsive. Call the Overdose Prevention Line at [1-888-853-8542](tel:1-888-853-8542) if you are about to use drugs and are located in Ontario. For their hours see [grenfellministries.org/overdose-prevention-line](http://grenfellministries.org/overdose-prevention-line).
- Do a small test dose first.
- Check your drugs at drug checking services, which are available at The Works, South Riverdale Community Health Centre and Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre (Queen West site).
- Get naloxone. Agencies that have it include: The Works, Parkdale-Queen West CHC, Regent Park CHC, South Riverdale CHC, Fred Victor, Eva's Satellite, Sistering, Sherbourne Health Centre, Seaton House, Agincourt Community Services Association, John Howard Society at 3313 Lakeshore Blvd West, LAMP CHC, and Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities at 2660 Eglinton Avenue East.
- You can also get a free naloxone kit at a pharmacy. Find out where at: [www.ontario.ca/page/get-naloxone-kits-free](http://www.ontario.ca/page/get-naloxone-kits-free) or by calling [1-800-565-8603](tel:1-800-565-8603).

**Important:** Naloxone is effective for temporarily reversing the effects all opioids, even if other drugs are involved. However, it does not reverse the effects of other drugs like benzodiazepines. **If someone is overdosing, give naloxone and call 911.**

More COVID-19 harm reduction tips are available here: <https://tinyurl.com/ty6ns7x>

In an overdose situation, the *Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act* provides legal protection from drug-related charges for carrying drugs for personal use and other simple possession offences.

