

Suspected Opioid Overdoses from Consuming Crack Cocaine

June 30, 2020

A number of overdoses with symptoms similar to severe opioid overdose, including death, were reported among people who consumed crack cocaine in Toronto's downtown area in the past several days. Information on what other drugs were contained in the crack cocaine that was consumed is not available at this time. However, reports from the community indicate that the supply of crack cocaine in Toronto may contain opioids. Several other regions in Ontario are also reporting crack cocaine related overdoses with symptoms similar to opioid overdose.

If someone is experiencing symptoms similar to opioid overdose after consuming stimulants such as crack cocaine, naloxone should be given to reverse the effects of any opioids contributing to the overdose. 911 should also be called so paramedics can help manage the overdose.

Fatal suspected opioid overdose calls to paramedics have been higher from March to May 2020; see [Toronto Overdose Information System](#). The increasingly toxic drug supply in addition to public health measures needed to prevent spread of COVID-19 continue to create challenges for people who use drugs, and for service providers.

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 until help arrives. COVID-19 is spread by droplets from the nose or mouth. Wear a face mask or face covering.** It is essential that all overdoses get medical attention. A list of supervised consumption services in Toronto is available at toronto.ca/ConsumptionService.

- **Use with someone else and take turns spotting for each other. Stay 6 feet from your buddy if you are not living together or wear a mask or face covering** to avoid passing the virus. A buddy system is safer than using alone.
- If you must use alone, let someone know so that they can check on you either by phone or in person. 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.
- Do a small test dose first.
- Check your drugs at drug checking services, which are available at The Works, South Riverdale Community Health Centre (KeepSIX and Moss Park) and Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre (Queen West and Parkdale sites).
- 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 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: toronto.ca/COVID19HarmReduction

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.

