

## Alert: Carfentanil found in fentanyl

September 18, 2020

Carfentanil, a highly potent fentanyl analogue, was found in 11% of expected fentanyl samples by [Toronto's drug checking service](#) between September 9 and 17, 2020. Carfentanil is associated with an increased risk of overdose and death.

Two of the four samples that were tested were reported to be purple. A number of overdoses associated with purple fentanyl have been recently reported by several harm reduction services across Toronto. The samples containing carfentanil also had other drugs of concern, including etizolam (a benzodiazepine-related drug). Benzodiazepines combined with opioids increase the risk of overdose and death.

Preliminary data indicate that between September 1 and 17, 2020, there were 13 suspected opioid overdose-related calls involving deaths reported by Toronto Paramedic Services. There has been an increase in suspected opioid overdose-related deaths in Toronto during the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information, visit [toronto.ca/health/overdosesstats](https://toronto.ca/health/overdosesstats).

The increasingly toxic drug supply in addition to public health measures needed to prevent spread of COVID-19 is having a devastating impact on people who use drugs. See overdose prevention and response tips and supports below.

### Overdose response tips:

- **Always give naloxone to someone experiencing an overdose (even if you don't know what drugs they took).** Some people may have used more than one drug, or the drug they thought they were taking contained unexpected drugs. Naloxone may not work on other drugs, but will temporarily reverse the effects of any opioids contributing to the overdose.
- **Call 911.** Medical attention is vital, especially with unexpected drugs in the supply. In an overdose situation, the *Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act* provides some legal protection from drug-related charges related to personal use and simple possession offences. Stay with the person until help arrives.
- **Wear a mask or face covering and medical gloves when helping in an overdose.** This will help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.

### Overdose prevention advice for people using drugs:

- **Try not to use alone.** Use with someone else and take turns spotting for each other. Stay six feet from your buddy if you are not in the same social circle, or wear a mask or face covering to avoid passing the virus. A buddy system is safer than using alone.
- **Use a supervised consumption service, if possible.** A list of supervised consumption services in Toronto is available at [toronto.ca/ConsumptionServices](https://toronto.ca/ConsumptionServices).
- **If you must use alone, have a safety plan.** Get someone to check on you either by phone or in person. Before you use, call the Overdose Prevention Line at [1-888-853-8542](tel:1-888-853-8542). For their hours and more information, see [grenfellministries.org/overdose-prevention-line](https://grenfellministries.org/overdose-prevention-line).
- **Vet your supply.** Ask others about what they are experiencing with the same drug or batch.
- **Check what's in your drugs at local drug checking services.** The Works, South Riverdale Community Health Centre (KeepSIX and Moss Park) and Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre (Queen West and Parkdale sites) can check for you.
- **Get naloxone.** Kits are available at 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 (3313 Lakeshore Blvd West), LAMP CHC, Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities (2660 Eglinton Avenue East), and other agencies. Free naloxone kits are available at some pharmacies. Visit [www.ontario.ca/page/get-naloxone-kits-free](https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-naloxone-kits-free) or call 1-800-565-8603.



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