

Drug Advisory: Increase in Deaths from Smoking Opioids

October 6, 2021

Deaths from smoking opioids in Toronto appear to be increasing. Toronto Paramedic Services have recently attended a number of overdose deaths where drug inhalation equipment (like pipes or foil) were present on scene.

The latest data from the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario also show a large increase in the number of opioid toxicity deaths in Toronto where *only* evidence of smoking were found (like pipe or foil), and no signs of injection. These deaths accounted for 30% of all accidental opioid toxicity deaths (164) from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021. This is a 43% increase in the proportion of overall opioid toxicity deaths, and a 178% increase in the total number of deaths with only evidence of pipe or foil compared to the previous year.

Overdose prevention and preparedness for people who smoke drugs

- **Try not to use alone.** A buddy system is safer than using alone.
- **If you must use alone, have a safety plan.** Get someone to check on you either by phone or in person. Before you use alone, call the National Overdose Response Service at [1-888-688-NORS \(6677\)](tel:1-888-688-NORS). You can connect to community members via the [Brave app](#).
- **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 or call 1-800-565-8603.

If someone looks like they are overdosing on opioids, give naloxone and call 911.

Wear a face covering and gloves. Keep a 6 foot distance from the person whenever you are not providing direct care to help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.

See overdose response tips in the [5-Step Response](#) poster.

If you would like to reach the Toronto Drug Strategy Secretariat, please contact drugstrategy@toronto.ca.



Smoke Drugs?

You can still OD.

And it can happen fast.

- **Know what you're smoking** – get your drugs checked before using.
- **Pace yourself** – take breaks as you go.
- **Buddy up** – use with someone you trust who can help if you go down.
- **Keep naloxone** close at hand.
- **Call NORS** – a free, anonymous phone call for real-time, life-saving support!

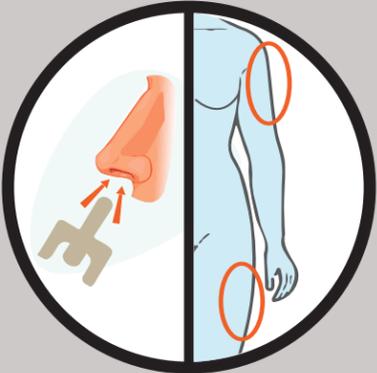
1-888-688-NORS (6677)



5 STEP OVERDOSE RESPONSE

STEP **1**  **SHOUT & SHAKE**
their name their shoulders

STEP **2**  **CALL 911**
if unresponsive

STEP **3**  **ADMINISTER NALOXONE**
1 spray into a nostril and/or 1 ampule into arm or leg

STEP **4**  **START CPR**
Do CHEST COMPRESSIONS ONLY
during COVID19 – NO rescue breathing

STEP **5**  **IS IT WORKING?**
If NO improvement in 2–3 minutes
repeat steps 3 & 4

STAY WITH THE PERSON

Clean your hands after providing care.