

## Recent high number of overdose calls to paramedics

December 3, 2021

### Why are we sending this alert?

- Paramedics experienced the highest number of daily calls for overdoses since monitoring of this data began in 2017.
- The Works supervised consumption service has experienced a higher than usual number of overdoses since November 25, 2021.

### Specifics

- Drugs causing the overdoses seem to be a range of colours.
- Overdoses are occurring across the city.
- Preliminary data shows that Toronto Paramedic Services have recently attended a much higher than average number of suspected opioid overdose calls from November 30 to December 1, 2021.
- **There were 60 suspected opioid overdose calls on Wednesday, December 1, 2021.** This is the highest daily number of calls reported by paramedics since monitoring of this data began in 2017. One of these calls to paramedics was fatal. There were 48 suspected opioid overdose calls on Tuesday November 30, 2021. Two of these calls to paramedics were fatal. These calls occurred across Toronto.
- From November 27 to December 1, there were 10 suspected opioid overdose deaths attended by Toronto Paramedic Services, which is higher than average for a five-day period. These fatal calls occurred across Toronto.
- A high number of overdoses have been responded to at The Works supervised consumption service since November 25.
- While specific details are not yet known, there appears to be a range of substances from the unregulated drug supply involved.
- [Toronto's drug checking service](#) continues to find highly potent nitazene opioids and benzodiazepine-related drugs in samples expected to be fentanyl.
- The use of highly-potent opioids – on their own or in combination with other drugs – may result in extreme sedation and dangerous suppression of the respiratory system. Since these drugs are so strong, the risk of overdose is increased, and greater than normal doses of naloxone may be required to rouse individuals experiencing an overdose.
- When highly-potent opioids are used in combination with other central nervous system or respiratory depressants, like benzodiazepine-related drugs, the risk of dangerous suppression of vitals is increased (e.g., slowing down of breathing, blood pressure, heart rate).

## **Overdose response and prevention advice for people using drugs:**

- **Try not to use alone.** A buddy system is safer than using alone.
- **Use a supervised consumption service, if possible. The Works is open Monday - Saturday from 10 am - 10 pm and on Sundays from 11 am - 5pm.** For locations and hours of other sites visit: [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 alone, call the National Overdose Response Service at **1-888-688-NORS (6677)**. 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](https://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.


# 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.