Increase in Drug-Related Deaths in Toronto

November 16, 2022

Why are we sending this alert?

- Over the past four weeks, there has been an increase in the number of fatal suspected opioid overdose calls attended by Toronto Paramedics Services. There have been three different occurrences where there were at least five fatal calls within a four-day period.
- <u>Toronto's Drug Checking Service</u> recently found higher concentrations of fentanyl than usual in fentanyl substances – particularly in fentanyl substances collected in the downtown core. They also found an increase in benzodiazepine-related drugs and an increase in carfentanil in fentanyl samples.
- Higher potency fentanyl in combination with carfentanil and benzodiazepine-related drugs
 may increase the risk of overdose, and additional supports may be required to rouse individuals
 experiencing an overdose. Always call 911 when somebody is experiencing an overdose, especially if
 someone is not responding to naloxone.

Drugs involved: A range of drugs were involved in these fatalities. Fentanyl continues to show up in the local drug supply in a variety of colours with unpredictable potency and contamination.

Location: Overdoses are occurring in a variety of neighbourhoods across the city.

Messages for people using drugs in Toronto:

- **Try not to use alone.** Buddy up with someone who you trust. Have a drug use safety plan and keep naloxone on-hand.
- Use a supervised consumption service, if possible. For locations and hours of sites please visit: toronto.ca/ConsumptionServices.
- If you must use alone, have a safety plan.
 - Get someone to check on you either by phone or in person.
 - Consider calling the National Overdose Response Service at 1-888-688-NORS (6677) to get support while using alone.
 - Connect to community members virtually via the <u>Brave app.</u>
- 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. Your drugs might have unexpected substances in them. Have them checked at one of the drug checking service locations in Toronto.
- **Get naloxone**. Kits are available at Toronto Public Health, The Works, and through many <u>partner organizations</u>. Free naloxone kits are also available at some pharmacies. Visit <u>www.ontario.ca/page/get-naloxone-kits-free</u> or call 1-800-565-8603.



5 STEP OVERDOSE RESPONSE

STEP





SHOUT&SHAKE

their name

their shoulders

STEP



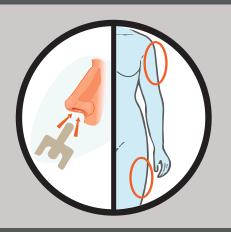


CALL 911

if unresponsive

STEP





ADMINISTER NALOXONE

1 spray into a nostril and/or 1 ampule into arm or leg

SHEP





START CPR

Do CHEST COMPRESSIONS ONLY during COVID19 — NO rescue breathing

STEP





IS IT WORKING?

If NO improvement in 2–3 minutes repeat steps 3 & 4

STAY WITH THE PERSON

Clean your hands after providing care.