

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**.
- [Toronto's Drug Checking Service](#) 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 \(6677\)](tel:1-888-688-NORS) to get [support while using alone](#).
 - Connect to community members virtually 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.** 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 [partner organizations](#). Free naloxone kits are also available at some pharmacies. Visit www.ontario.ca/page/get-naloxone-kits-free or call 1-800-565-8603.



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.