

Drug Alert: Increase in Drug-Related Deaths in Toronto

August 23, 2023

Why are we sending this alert?

- There was an **increase in suspected opioid overdose-related deaths** attended by Toronto Paramedics Services from August 19-22nd, 2023.
 - During this period, preliminary data shows that there were **7 suspected opioid overdose-related deaths**, which is more than double the current average for a four-day period.

Additional Information

- [Toronto's Drug Checking Service](#) continues to confirm that the unregulated opioid supply is contaminated, and unpredictable. Persistent trends in samples expected to be fentanyl include:
 - Inconsistent amounts of fentanyl, making it difficult to make informed dosing decisions.
 - A variety of high-potency opioids found in combination, increasing the risk of overdose, and requiring greater than normal doses of naloxone needed to reverse overdoses.
 - Other central nervous system and respiratory depressants found, like benzodiazepine-related drugs and xylazine, increasing the risk of dangerous suppression of vitals (e.g., slowing down of breathing, blood pressure, heart rate).
- While specifics are not known, there appears to be a range of drugs involved in this increase in overdose fatalities.
- Overdoses are occurring in a variety of neighbourhoods across the city.

Note

- Toronto Public Health monitors overdose calls attended by Toronto Paramedics Services. The increase in the number of fatal suspected opioid overdose calls triggered alert thresholds.

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.
 - Call the National Overdose Response Service at **1-888-688-NORS (6677)** 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

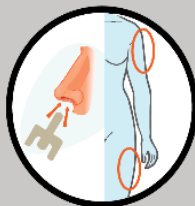


CALL 911

if unresponsive

STEP

3

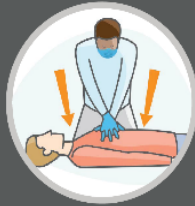


ADMINISTER NALOXONE

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

STEP

4



START CPR

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