

Drug Alert Update: Continued High Number of Drug Related Deaths & Worsening Contamination of the Unregulated Drug Supply in Toronto

March 27, 2024

Why are we sending this alert?

- Toronto Paramedics Services continue to attend **a higher than usual number of suspected opioid overdose-related deaths.**
 - Between March 23-26, 2024, preliminary data shows there were **7 suspected opioid overdose-related deaths.**
 - This update follows two drug alerts issued by Toronto Public Health on [March 18](#) and [February 28](#) about increases in suspected opioid overdose-related deaths and this trend is continuing.

Additional Information

- There is no additional information available at this time about the specific drugs connected to these overdose related deaths, however:
- [Toronto's Drug Checking Service](#) continues to confirm significantly worsening contamination and unpredictability of the unregulated opioid supply. [Recent trends](#) include:
 - **Increase in high-potency opioid contamination, benzodiazepine-related drug contamination and veterinary tranquilizer contamination** in expected fentanyl samples.
 - **Higher than usual concentrations of fentanyl** in expected fentanyl samples.
 - [Increase in the presence of](#) nitazene opioids in samples of unregulated/non-prescribed oxycodone (OxyContin), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), hydrocodone, and Percocet.
- Overdoses are occurring **throughout the city.**

Messages for people using drugs in Toronto:

- **Try not to use alone.** Buddy up with someone who you trust.
- **Keep naloxone on-hand.**
 - 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.
 - Benzodiazepines in the unregulated drug supply may cause people to be sedated longer than usual. Because naloxone will not work on the benzodiazepines, some people may remain unconscious after naloxone administration even after their breathing returns.
- **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 \(6677\)](tel:1-888-688-NORS) to get support while using alone.
 - Connect to community members virtually via the [Brave app](#).
- **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](#).

5 STEP OVERDOSE RESPONSE

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

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**
Perform rescue breathing and/or chest compressions

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



During overdose response. Stay up to date with your COVID-19 and flu vaccines.

 **TORONTO** Public Health