

COMMUNITY DRUG ALERT

November 6, 2024

Increase in drug poisoning related calls to emergency services


- From October 31 to November 5 there was an increase in the number of overdoses/drug poisonings, with 35 reported cases.
- Deep yellow, pale yellow, orange, and green fentanyl are colours of concern.
- The Kitchener CTS Drug Checking Program has seen an increase in xylazine. Medetomidine/dexmedetomidine and oxazepam continue to be detected.
- The presence of opioids in combination with xylazine increases the risk of an overdose/ drug poisoning and death. When using xylazine, the person may not wake up for a long time. If possible, stay with the person until they wake up or help arrives.
- Concerns were raised by community members about the unpredictability of the meth supply which may cause unexpected reactions.
- Naloxone does not reverse the effects of non-opioid substances such as xylazine, oxazepam, and medetomidine/dexmedetomidine. Naloxone should still be given in suspected overdoses.
- While a connection between the substances identified and the reported drug overdose/poisonings are not known, the details on these substances are included for your information.

IF SOMEONE OVERDOSES:

1. Call 911.
2. Administer naloxone if an opioid drug poisoning is suspected.
3. Perform rescue breathing and/or chest compressions.
4. Do not give any other substance(s) because this can make the overdose/drug poisoning worse.
5. If no improvements, continue to give naloxone 2-3 minutes apart until paramedics arrive.
6. If you have to leave the person unattended, put them in the recovery position.

IF USING SUBSTANCES:

- Never use substances alone. If using with a friend, do not use at the exact same time or use the National Overdose Response Service (NORS) at 1-888-688-6677.
- Try a small amount first and use less drugs when your tolerance may be lower.
- Avoid mixing substances – do not use other downers (e.g. benzos, alcohol, and other opioids).
- Have naloxone ready and know how to use it.
- Use at the Consumption & Treatment Services (CTS) site at 150 Duke Street West (Open 7 days a week, 9am-9pm, 8:30pm last call). Drug checking services are also available at the CTS site. Visit <https://sanguen.com/drug-checking-program/>
- Anyone who is involved in an overdose/drug poisoning including the person needing help and anyone at the scene is protected from simple possession charges if you call 911 by the Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act.

Get a Naloxone Kit	Get Alerts	Get Support
<p>Naloxone kits and harm reduction supplies are free and available for pickup across Waterloo Region.</p> <p>For pickup at public health or a community partner location, visit regionofwaterloo.ca/harmreduction or call 519-575-4400.</p> <p>For other locations in Waterloo Region and across Ontario, visit Ontario.ca/naloxone.</p>	<p>Follow us on Twitter for community drug alert updates: @DrugStrategyWR.</p> <p>To sign up to receive alerts, visit https://subscription.waterlooregiondrugstrategy.ca/Subscribe or scan the QR code with a mobile device.</p> 	<p>Call Here 24/7 for addiction, mental health, and crisis services anytime for support.</p> <p>1-844-437-3247 1-844-HERE247 here247.ca.</p>

Detected Substances from the Drug Checking Program – Key Information

Fentanyl

- A highly potent opioid, up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. Fentanyl is the opioid of choice for many people who use opioids. Since the unregulated drug supply is unpredictable, a person may want to use fentanyl but it could be laced with something else or could be stronger.
- Naloxone can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose/ drug poisoning.

Fentanyl Analogues

- The continued presence of new high-potency opioids in the unregulated drug supply increases the risk of an overdose/ drug poisoning. Overdoses may require **more naloxone than expected**

Xylazine

- A veterinary medication used on animals for sedation, muscle relaxation, and pain relief.
- The presence of opioids in combination with Xylazine increases the risk of an overdose/ drug poisoning and death. Naloxone should still be used to reverse the effects of opioids, but naloxone cannot reverse the effects of Xylazine.
- In the event of an opioid and Xylazine overdose/drug poisoning, the effects of Xylazine might maintain sedation for a longer period of time. This means that the person may not wake up for an extended amount of time. If possible, stay with the person until they wake up or help arrives.
- Xylazine can produce significant harmful effects such as:
 - Shallow or slow breathing.
 - Low blood pressure and decreased heart rate.
 - Blurred vision, disorientation, dizziness, drowsiness, difficulty moving, slurred speech and fatigue.
 - Death.
- Xylazine can cause skin ulcers or wounds with possible infection, even if Xylazine is smoked or snorted. Xylazine wounds can take months or years to heal and may not heal without medical care.

Oxazepam

- A benzodiazepine-related drug that may be used to treat anxiety and symptoms of alcohol withdrawal.
- Oxazepam can slow or stop breathing, especially if an opioid or alcohol was recently used.
- An overdose of oxazepam can be fatal, especially if taken with alcohol, opioids, or other drugs that cause drowsiness or slow breathing.
- Oxazepam is known as a slow "creeper" because the risk of overdose may not happen right away but could happen later.
- Taking opioids in combination with benzodiazepine-related drugs increases the risk of an overdose/ drug poisoning and death.
- Naloxone cannot reverse the sedative effects of non-opioid substances such as Oxazepam. Continue to give naloxone in suspected overdoses. When possible, provide oxygen as well.

Medetomidine/dexmedetomidine

- Anesthetic drugs that are stronger than xylazine. These drugs last longer and the person may not wake up for a long time.
- Medetomidine is a tranquilizer approved only for use on animals. Dexmedetomidine is approved for use on humans in addition to animals for sedation and pain relief.
- Medetomidine/Dexmedetomidine was found in combination with Fentanyl. When used with strong opioids the risk of dangerous suppression of vitals (i.e. slowing down of breathing, blood pressure, heart rate) is increased, which can present as extreme drowsiness and sedation.
 1. Naloxone cannot reverse the sedative effects of non-opioid substances such as Medetomidine/dexmedetomidine. Continue to give naloxone in suspected overdoses. When possible, give oxygen as well.

Drug checking is available at the Kitchener CTS site, for more information please visit:

<https://sanguen.com/drug-checking-program/>

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