

# COMMUNITY DRUG ALERT

May 15, 2024

## Three suspected drug overdose/poisoning related deaths from May 11 – May 13

- From May 11<sup>th</sup> – May 13<sup>th</sup>, there were three suspected drug overdose/poisoning related deaths.
- The unregulated drug supply is unpredictable, drug overdoses/poisonings may require more naloxone and unexpected reactions may occur.
- The Kitchener CTS Drug Checking Program has detected samples of Fentanyl, combined with various Fentanyl analogues, Desalkylgidazepam, Bromazolam, Xylazine, Medetomidine/ Dexmedetomidine and parafluorofentanyl. Colours of concern include burgundy, deep red to light pink, green, and pale green. While a connection between the substances identified and the suspected drug overdose/poisoning related deaths is 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 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 a 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.

## RESOURCES

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 <a href="https://regionofwaterloo.ca/harmreduction">regionofwaterloo.ca/harmreduction</a> or call 519-575-4400.</p> <p>For other locations in Waterloo Region and across Ontario, visit <a href="https://Ontario.ca/naloxone">Ontario.ca/naloxone</a>.</p>	<p>Follow us on Twitter for community drug alert updates: @DrugStrategyWR.</p> <p>To sign up to receive alerts, visit <a href="https://subscription.waterlooregiondrugstrategy.ca/Subscribe">https://subscription.waterlooregiondrugstrategy.ca/Subscribe</a> 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 <a href="https://here247.ca">here247.ca</a>.</p>

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## Detected Substances from the Drug Checking Program – Key Information

### Fentanyl

- A highly potent opioid, considered 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 increases the risk of an overdose/ drug poisoning and **may require more naloxone than expected** to rouse individuals.

### Desalkylgidazepam

- A long acting benzodiazepine-related drug, with a half life of about 80-86 hours. Because of this long half life, using additional substances during this time frame can increase the potential for adverse effects.
- Using high-potency opioids in combination with benzodiazepine-related drugs increases the risk of dangerous suppression of vitals (e.g., slowing down of breathing, blood pressure, heart rate).

### Medetomidine/dexmedetomidine

- Anesthetic drugs considered to be more potent than xylazine (longer acting and producing greater sedation).
- 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 has been detected in combination with Fentanyl. When used in combination with high-potency 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.
- In the event of an opioid and Medetomidine/Dexmedetomidine overdose/drug poisoning, naloxone will only work to reverse the effects of the opioid and not the sedation caused by Medetomidine/Dexmedetomidine. When possible, provide oxygen as part of the overdose response.

### Bromazolam

- A highly potent, benzodiazepine-related drug.
- The presence of opioids in combination with benzodiazepine-related drugs 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 benzodiazepines.
- In the event of an opioid and benzodiazepine-related overdose/drug poisoning, the effects of the benzodiazepine may 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.
- Benzodiazepine effects can include the following:
  - Blackouts, memory loss, drowsiness and sedation: the person may feel very sleepy and slip in and out of consciousness.
  - Slurred speech, impaired balance, grogginess and/or movement control.
  - Slow breathing.

## **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.

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

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