

## HARM REDUCTION NEWS

FALL/WINTER 2020

### Responding to Atypical Overdoses

In recent months the drug supply has become increasingly unpredictable. As a result, OPS sites and community partners are seeing an increase in atypical overdose presentations that may require additional measures beyond the standard [SAVE ME](#) protocol for opioid overdose. The Harm Reduction Program has developed resources to support sites in responding to atypical overdoses.

**FAQ:** Provides answers to some common questions about how to respond. Topics include:

- Responding to seizures, agitation and uncontrolled movements
- The importance of giving breaths

**Overdose Prevention Manual** (pages 9-12):

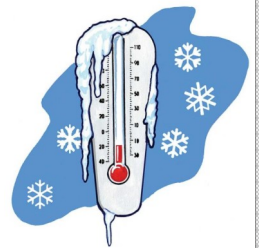
Drug-specific overdose information including:

- Responding to fentanyl induced muscle rigidity
- Assessing and responding to benzo overdoses
- Recognizing and responding to stimulant overdoses

**Synthetic Cannabinoids:** What they are, how they work and how to respond to the effects.

### Naloxone and Cold Temperatures

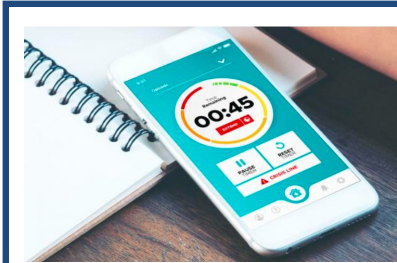
It's the time of year when temperatures drop and we start getting questions about how naloxone is affected by cold weather. Studies have shown that naloxone can remain stable after exposure to freezing temperatures (as low as  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) for up to 2 weeks. While this is good news, it is still good advice to reduce exposure to freezing temperatures especially for long periods of time.



#### What to do when the weather gets nasty cold:

- Carry naloxone near your body (in a pocket or attached to your belt under your jacket or coat) to help keep it warm.
- Avoid leaving naloxone outdoors or in a vehicle for long periods of time during a cold snap.
- If you have naloxone that you know has been exposed to cold for long periods of time - you can get it replaced at a Take Home Naloxone site.
- If the only naloxone available to respond to an overdose may have been exposed to cold **use it anyways!** It may not be as effective but it is better than not using any at all.

Toward the Heart has a number of fact sheets on Naloxone - they can be found under the [Health Professionals Tab](#).



### Get the Lifeguard App

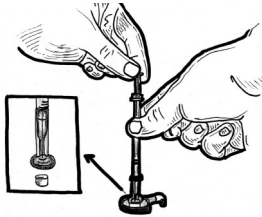
If you or someone you know uses drugs, Lifeguard App provides one more way to stay safer. This life-saving app can automatically connect you to emergency responders if you become unresponsive. [Download it for FREE on your smartphone or tablet.](#)

## What's New?

### Safer Tablet Injection

Tablet medications (pills) from a pharmacy are less likely to cause an overdose compared to drugs or pills from the illicit market. This is because the dose and contents of prescribed drugs are known.

Tablet medications contain fillers (e.g. coatings and powders) that can cause harm when injected, such as serious infections, abscesses and damage to the veins, skin, heart, and lungs. These risks can be reduced by using harm reduction supplies, including the cotton filters (option 3) that are available with cookers through the provincial harm reduction program. Sterifilt filters (option 1 and 2) are not currently available through the provincial program and would have to be purchased.



The BCCDC Harm Reduction Program has created resources to support people who inject tablet medication and would like to do so more safely. You can find the document [here](#).

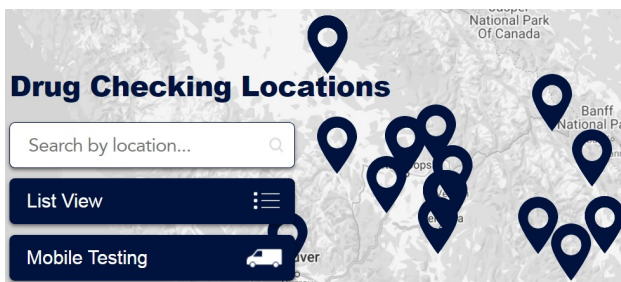
Videos will be released at a later date!

### Take Home Drug Checking Expands

The Take Home Drug Checking program (using fentanyl test strips) is continuing to expand.

Recently, several Interior Health Mental Health and Substance Use Services locations have joined community agencies, supportive housing and shelters in offering the program. Sites open to the public are listed on [drugchecking.ca](http://drugchecking.ca).

Reach out to the harm reduction team to find out how to offer the program at your location.



### THN Kit Referral Stickers

The IH Aboriginal Overdose Response Working Group has developed referral stickers to be placed on THN kits. The stickers contain information on who to connect with for harm reduction, substance use and mental health services. All THN sites in IH should have received them. Reach out to the Harm Reduction or Aboriginal Mental Wellness Teams if you have questions.

### COVID-19: Supply Distribution

Outreach services are critical to maintain supplies and connections with clients, now more than ever. All clients should be able to access the harm reduction supplies they need, even in quarantine. This [resource](#) from the BCCDC provides valuable information on how to keep providing this essential service safely during the pandemic.



### Responding to Drug Overdoses during COVID-19

Developed in conjunction with people with lived experience, this [brochure](#) provides instruction using simple language with photos on how to respond to overdose during the COVID-19 pandemic. It addresses important questions around the use of PPE and the importance of giving breaths.



Thank you for all the important work you do!

YOUR HARM REDUCTION TEAM

Questions, comments, have a great harm reduction initiative you want to share? Get in touch! We would LOVE to hear from you. Email us! [harmreduction.coordinator@interiorhealth.ca](mailto:harmreduction.coordinator@interiorhealth.ca)