

For Immediate Release | August 30, 2017

Overdose Alert: Kelowna

Interior Health is urging residents using or considering using drugs to reconsider or take steps to prevent overdose in the wake of several recent suspected drug overdose deaths in the Kelowna area.

According to preliminary data provided by the BC Coroners Service, there were seven suspected overdose deaths in the Kelowna area from August 17-26. The exact causes of death will be confirmed by the BC Coroners Service once their investigations are complete.

The suspected overdose deaths appear to be associated with the use of illegal drugs. Therefore, all people who use illegal drugs are being advised to take precautions to prevent overdose. Overdose deaths are occurring in private residences as well as in public spaces.

Not using drugs at all is the best way to avoid overdose and other health impacts. However, health-care providers recognize some people will continue to use drugs. Anyone who uses illegal drugs should follow the recommendations below to reduce the risk of overdose.

The following tips can help reduce the risk:

- Don't mix different drugs (including pharmaceutical medications, street drugs, and alcohol).
- Don't take drugs when you are alone. Leave door unlocked. Tell someone to check on you.
- Use less and pace yourself. Do test runs to check strength - take a small sample of a drug before taking your usual dosage.
- Keep an eye out for your friends – stay together and look out for each other.
- Carry a Naloxone kit and know how to use it. A list of locations to get a kit can be found on the Interior Health [website](#).
- Recognize the signs of an OD: Slow or no breathing, gurgling or gasping, lips/fingertips turning blue, difficult to rouse (awaken), non-responsive.
- If someone thinks they may be having an overdose or is witnessing an overdose, follow [the SAVE ME steps](#) and call 9-1-1 immediately, do not delay.

Interior Health's overdose response strategy includes enhanced fatal and non-fatal overdose surveillance, increasing accessibility to harm reduction tools including Take Home Naloxone (THN) kits, establishing supervised consumption services, scaling-up substance use treatment services for people who use drugs, and providing population based education and prevention. More information about Interior Health's overdose response strategy is available on our website

<https://www.interiorhealth.ca/AboutUs/Leadership/MHO/PHEmergency/Pages/default.aspx>

Additional information on overdose prevention can be found at:

<http://www.gov.bc.ca/overdose>

<http://towardtheheart.com>