

BENZODIAZEPINE (BENZO) ADVISORY

Drug checking within the Interior Health region continues to detect benzodiazepines (benzos) in multiple drug samples in several communities across the region. Benzodiazepines have been found in a variety of substances most often sold as “down”, heroin, or fentanyl. There has been a wide range of colours and textures identified.

Risk: Benzodiazepines mixed with opioids carry a high risk of overdose and can cause prolonged sedation, sleepiness, muscle relaxation, slurred speech, loss of consciousness, black outs/memory loss.

Overdose Response: Responding to overdoses involving BOTH Opioids and Benzos is more complex. Naloxone does not work on Benzos, BUT naloxone will work on the opioid overdose symptoms. After giving breaths and naloxone, the person may begin breathing normally, but may not wake up. More doses of naloxone should only be given if the person is not breathing normally (less than 10 breaths a minute). If the person is breathing normally but remains unconscious, place in recovery position and stay with them until emergency services arrive.

Call to action:

- Reinforce overdose prevention messaging: don't use alone, start small – go low and slow, use overdose prevention services.
- Talk to clients about getting their drugs tested for benzodiazepines. Benzo testing is currently available at the following the locations:
 - ASK Wellness: Kamloops – 778-257-1292
 - Supervised Consumption Service: Kelowna
 - UBCO Harm Reduction Program: Kelowna, Penticton, Vernon 250-864-1431
 - Vernon Overdose Prevention Site: 250-503-3737
 - ANKORS: Cranbrook - 250-426-3383
 - ANKORS: Nelson - 250-505-5506
 - MHSU Overdose Prevention Nurses - Penticton - 250-462-1050
- Ensure that service providers and peer responders are aware of how to recognize and respond to overdoses involving benzos. Giving breaths is a crucial part of the response.
- View, post and share the resources below on recognizing and responding to overdoses involving benzodiazepines.

[IH - Mixed Opioid and Benzodiazepine Overdose](#)

[BCCDC- Responding to an Opioid Overdose with Benzodiazepines or Etizolam](#)

[BCCDC - Do I keep giving Naloxone?](#)