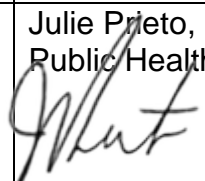




COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members Board of Health
DATE:	June 4, 2025
SUBJECT:	Drug Alert: Increased Emergency Medical Services Responses June 4, 2025 (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Julie Prieto, Director Public Health Services, Epidemiology & Wellness Division
SIGNATURE:	

This communication is to notify you of Public Health Services issuing a Drug Alert to community partners on June 4, 2025. Public Health Services collaborates with community partners in monitoring surveillance data and reports from these providers about patterns of substance use toxicity. Drug Alerts are issued when Public Health Services receives information about concerning trends in the community or a risk that has been identified with circulating substances. The goal of the Drug Alert is to notify community partners and protect members in the community who may be using substances from additional risk and encourage them to take additional precautionary measures when consuming substances.

Drug Alert: Increased Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Responses for Suspect Drug Poisoning

Hamilton Public Health Services has been informed of an increase in drug-related Emergency Medical Services (EMS) calls and Emergency Room visits for the week of May 26, 2025 to June 2, 2025.

- From May 26, 2025 to June 2, 2025 there have been 39 paramedic responses, the largest number in a week since September 25, 2023 to October 1, 2023.
- Multiple reports were received from community partners of unusual or noteworthy overdose presentations, including slow and shallow breathing, turning purple quickly, and uncontrolled or erratic body movement, the latter possibly caused by Phencyclidine (PCP) in the opioid supply.
- During the morning of June 2, 2025, seven suspected drug poisoning events due to opioids were seen in a local emergency department.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

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- Multiple reports were received of drug poisoning events requiring high number of naloxone doses which could indicate a more toxic or contaminated drug supply.

Information about Public Health Services harm reduction programs and services can be found here: <https://www.hamilton.ca/people-programs/public-health/alcohol-drugs-gambling/harm-reduction-services>

Additional supports and resources shared with community partners are outlined below.

An alert poster is attached as Appendix “A” for distribution.

How Health and Social Service Providers Can Help

Alert individuals using street drugs and their families/ friends of the potential increased risk of drug poisoning. Encourage the following strategies with clients and community members:

- Avoid using alone.
- Call a friend, family member or the National Overdose Response Service at 1-888-688-6677 (NORS) for anonymous 24-hour support before and while using substances.
- Use a smaller dose (low and slow).
- Use new harm reduction supplies every time you use.
- When injecting, boil your drugs an extra 30 seconds to reduce chance of infection.

Provide the following education to people who use drugs, their friends and family:

- Recognize the signs of a drug poisoning.
- Call 911 when drug poisoning is suspected.
- Perform Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) as necessary.
- Administer Naloxone. With more potent drugs, there is a possibility that a person will require multiple doses.

Providers are encouraged to:

- Visit www.hamilton.ca/naloxone for a free naloxone kit and training.
- Refer clients to harm reduction services, addiction treatment and drug withdrawal services.
- Refer clients to the Mental Health and Addiction Treatment (MHAT) Hub.
- Prescribing or managing opioids according to most recent guidelines.

For more information related to this alert, please email Harm.Reduction@hamilton.ca. Thank you for your continued support and commitment to a collaborative response to the drug poisoning crisis in Hamilton.

Additional Resources

Naloxone Distribution & Harm Reduction Supplies

- Hamilton Public Health Services: <http://www.hamilton.ca/naloxone>, <http://www.hamilton.ca/drugchecking>
- Pharmacy Naloxone Program / Drug & Alcohol Helpline: 1-800-565-8603
- The Positive Health Network: 1-866-563-0563
- Marchese Health Care: 905-528-4214
- Hamilton Urban Core Community Health Centre: 905-522-3233
- The Hub: 365-833-7854
- The Van Needle Syringe Program: 905-317-9966

National Overdose Response Service (NORS)

- Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year in Canada: 1-888-688-NORS (6677)

The Brave App – Overdose Detection Tools

- Learn more about the application: <https://www.brave.coop>

Mental Health and Addiction Treatment

- Mental Health and Addiction Treatment (MHAT) Hub
430 Cannon St East, Hamilton, ON L8L 2C8
905-522-3233
MHATHub@hucchc.com
<https://hucchc.com/a-historic-milestone-for-hamilton-urban-core-and-our-community-introducing-the-mental-health-and-addiction-treatment-mhat-hub/>

Addiction Treatment

- Public Health Services Alcohol Drugs and Gambling Services
<https://www.hamilton.ca/people-programs/public-health/alcohol-drugs-gambling/alcohol-drug-gambling-services>
- St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton Womankind Addiction Service: 905-545-9100
- St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton Men's Addiction Service: 905-527-9264
- Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) Clinic (<https://www.stjoes.ca/hospital-services/mental-health-addiction-services/rapid-access-addiction-medicine-raam-clinic>)
- Alternatives for Youth (youth 12-25): 905-527-4469 Ext. 3 (<http://www.ay.on.ca/>)

If you have any questions, or require additional information, please contact Julie Prieto, Director, Epidemiology & Wellbeing Division, Public Health Services at (905) 546-2424 Ext. 3528 or Julie.Prieto@hamilton.ca.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix "A" to Board of Health Communication Update (2025-06-04) Drug Alert – Increased Emergency Medical Services Responses

Drug Alert: Increased EMS Responses for Suspect Drug Poisoning

There has been a significant increase in paramedic calls and ED visits for suspect drug poisoning from May 26th to June 2nd

- Multiple reports were received from community partners of unusual overdoses, including slow and shallow breathing, turning purple quickly, and uncontrolled or erratic body movement, the latter possibly caused by PCP in the opioid supply.
- Multiple reports were received of drug poisoning events requiring high number of naloxone doses which could indicate a more toxic or contaminated drug supply.

Harm Reduction Safer Use Tips:

Careful Use test the effect with small amounts first and don't use alone.

- Call the overdose prevention line (NORS): 1-888-688-6677

Carry Naloxone To get a FREE naloxone kit & training call 905-546-4276 or visit www.hamilton.ca/naloxone

Call 911 for every overdose.

CPR Push hard, push fast.

Date Posted: [June 4, 2025]



Hamilton