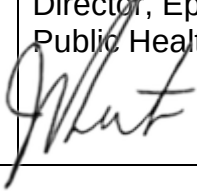




COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Chair and Members Board of Health and Mayor and Members City Council
DATE:	July 14, 2025
SUBJECT:	Drug Alert - Increased Emergency Medical Services Responses and Unusual Drug Poisonings (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Julie Prieto Director, Epidemiology & Wellness Division Public Health Services
SIGNATURE:	

This communication is to notify you of Public Health Services issuing a Drug Alert to community partners on July 11, 2025. Public Health Services collaborates with community partners in monitoring surveillance data and reports from these providers about patterns of substance 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 Responses and Severe and Unusual Drug Poisonings

Hamilton Public Health Services has been informed of high volume of Emergency Medical Services responses for suspect drug poisonings since June 30, 2025, along with multiple reports of severe and unusual overdoses in the community.

- For the week of June 30, 2025 to July 6, 2025, there was a particularly high number of Emergency Medical Services responses with 43 being reported. This is the highest weekly number reported since December 2016. The next highest

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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number would be the back-to-back weeks of 32 and 34 calls reported on the weeks of May 26, 2025 and June 2, 2025 this year;

- Information from community partners collected via the Early Warning System Survey indicates a significant increase in opioid-related overdoses. Several of the suspected drug poisonings involving severe and unusual symptoms such as prolonged sedation, paralysis, hallucinations, incoherence, and overdoses requiring more than four naloxone doses;
- Community partners have flagged tranq dope, carfentanil, yellow down, and red and white down as particularly high-risk substances currently circulating. Additionally, there are growing concerns about drug supplies being cut with phencyclidine (PCP) and zaleplon and there are reports of distinctly colored drugs (specifically pink and orange) being linked to these adverse reactions;
- Multiple reports were received of drug poisoning events requiring high number of naloxone doses which could indicate a more toxic or contaminated drug supply; and,
- The Toronto Drug Checking Service is reporting increasingly more contamination of the drug supply with veterinary tranquilizers such as medetomidine and xylazine in fentanyl samples. Waterloo is reporting crystal meth samples that are causing immediate unconsciousness as well as medetomidine in many fentanyl samples.

To view the Drug Alert – July 11, 2025, please visit the link below:

<https://www.hamilton.ca/alert/increased-ems-calls-and-severe-and-unusual-drug-poisonings-community>

Information about Public Health Service and community programs and services can be found at the link below:

<https://www.hamilton.ca/people-programs/public-health/alcohol-drugs-gambling/harm-reduction-services>

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

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

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix “A” to Board of Health Communication Update (2025-07-14) Drug Alert - Increased Emergency Medical Services Responses and Unusual Drug Poisonings

Drug Alert: Increased EMS Responses and Severe and Unusual Drug Poisonings in the Community

There has been a high volume of EMS calls for suspect drug poisoning since June 30th along with multiple reports of severe and unusual overdoses in the community

- **Severe and unusual overdose symptoms** such as paralysis, hallucinations, incoherence, prolonged sedation, requiring 4+ naloxone doses.
- **Toxic Drug Supply:** High-risk substances include tranq dope (fentanyl with xylazine/medetomidine), carfentanil, and colored down (yellow, red/white).
- **Shifting Drug Supply:** The Toronto Drug Checking Service reported a shift from benzodiazepines to veterinary tranquilizers like medetomidine and xylazine in fentanyl samples. Waterloo reports yellow/brown meth causing unconsciousness and medetomidine in many samples – often dark blue/green

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 – Naloxone will still help in an opioid related overdose. To get a FREE naloxone kit & training call 905-546-4276 or visit www.hamilton.ca/naloxone.

Call 911 for every drug poisoning.

Perform CPR

Focus on breathing – with prolonged sedation the person may not wake up fully, but may be breathing normally

Date Posted: July 11, 2025