

June 12, 2023

Public Health Alert – Increase in suspected drug-related deaths

Situation

Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) notes that the number of suspected drug-related deaths in the last three weeks is higher than normal.

These suspected drug-related deaths are not necessarily opioid related. Our confirmed opioid overdose emergency room visit data has not indicated a spike.

Issue

There may be increased toxicity in the drug supply in our communities. The potential for overdose and death may be higher than normal.

Prevention and harm reduction opportunities

Messaging for patients/clients:

- Don't use alone. Have someone with you, on the phone, or download and use the [Lifeguard App](#).
- If using with a friend, do not use at the same time. Make sure the other person is OK before you use.
- Carry naloxone and know how to use it – although not effective on xylazine, it is effective on opioids.
- Call 911 with a suspected overdose. The [Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act](#) provides some legal protection to the person calling.

Please consider counselling on the range of treatment options for opioid use disorder including opioid agonist treatments.

Resources

- [Northwestern Health Unit - Naloxone and Opioid Overdose Prevention](#)

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