



Nitazenes

Nitazenes (ny-TAH-zeenz) are opioids that can be more toxic than fentanyl. They were first found in Canada's unregulated drug supply in 2019, and in Ontario in 2021. Nitazenes are not approved for clinical use.

Synthetic nitazene opioids are being "cut" (mixed) into Ontario's unregulated supply. In 2024, an increase in the presence of nitazenes has been found in opioids expected to be oxycodone (OxyContin), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), hydrocodone and Percocet ([Toronto's Drug Checking Service](#)):

- N-desethyl etonitazene (considered up to 10 times more toxic than fentanyl)
- Protonitazepyne (considered more than 20 times more toxic than fentanyl)

Be aware:

- Nitazene opioids can increase the risk of overdose, especially for individuals who have lower opioid tolerances or for people who do not use fentanyl.
- Nitazenes are often present with other depressant substances, such as [benzodiazepine-related drugs and veterinary tranquilizers](#). This increases the risk of slow, irregular, or stopped breathing, and decreases in blood pressure and heart rate.
- Naloxone should be used in a suspected overdose and may temporarily reverse the effects of nitazene opioids. Continue to follow the [The 5 Steps to Respond to an Opioid Overdose](#).

Individuals who use drugs are reminded:

- **Carry naloxone:** Naloxone is a medication that can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. Naloxone kits are available at no cost in Ontario. Please visit [StopOverdoseOttawa.ca](#) to find out how to get a naloxone kit.
- **Don't use alone:** A buddy system is safer than using alone. If you are using with someone else, don't use at the exact same time.
- **If you do use alone, tell someone before you use:** Have a safety plan which includes having someone come check on you. You can also call the [National Overdose Prevention Line](#) at 1-888-688-NORS (6677) or connect with an anonymous virtual harm reduction supporter via the [Brave App](#).
- **If you choose to use:** Consider visiting one of the four [Supervised Consumption and Treatment Services](#) locations in Ottawa.
- **Get your drugs checked before using:** Walk-in drug checking services are available at [Sandy Hill Community Health Centre](#) and for registered clients of [Ottawa Inner City Health's Consumption and Treatment Service](#).
- **Don't mix drugs:** Using more than one drug at a time puts you at a higher risk of overdose.
- **Know your tolerance:** The risk of overdose increases if you are using for the first time or if you haven't used in more than three days.
- **Go slow:** The toxicity of unregulated drugs is unpredictable.

If you have a friend or family member who uses drugs, you are encouraged to:

- **Know the [signs of an overdose](#) and call 9-1-1 immediately if you witness an overdose.**
- **Carry [naloxone](#)** – a medication that can temporarily reverse an opioid overdose.

Visit [StopOverdoseOttawa.ca](#) for more information on overdose prevention and harm reduction services.