

Safer Drug Use & COVID-19

We understand that some of these recommendations are easier to do than others, and that you must do what you can to stay safe while using. Do the best you can.

You can get COVID-19 from a person who has it. The most common symptoms are a cough, fever, and shortness of breath. The virus can spread to people who are within 2 metres or 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 when that person coughs or sneezes, or through direct contact with that person's saliva or mucus.

How can I prevent COVID-19?

Wash your hands:



- Wash your hands using soap and water for 20 seconds (sing Happy Birthday twice or sing the whole alphabet) before handling your drugs. If a sink is not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Wash your hands right before and after any contact with others, using public transit, or handling cash or other items.
- Prepare your own drugs and try not to let others handle your drugs. If you aren't able to prepare your own drugs, make sure the person who does washes their hands first.
- Try not to touch your eyes, face, nose, and mouth.
- Cough and sneeze into your sleeve or into a tissue. Do not cover your hands with your mouth when coughing or sneezing.

Clean your area:



- Wipe down surfaces before preparing your drugs using household disinfectant or an alcohol-based solution. Follow manufacturer's instructions on any products being used. You can also use diluted bleach (4 teaspoons of bleach in 4 cups of water) to clean hard surfaces – apply the solution to a hard surface and leave on the surface for 1 minute before wiping it down.

Harm reduction tips:



- Use new equipment every time (including cookers, tourniquets, and inhalation supplies).
- As usual, don't share supplies – this includes pipes and other inhalation equipment, injection supplies, cigarettes, bottles, and utensils.
- Cook your drugs every time you use. This helps to kill any bacteria and viruses that may be present.

Carrying your drugs:



- Avoid putting drug baggies or wraps in your mouth, anus (bum hole) or vagina (front hole). If you carry drugs inside your body, make sure to clean the container thoroughly with an alcohol-based solution (ex. alcohol swabs) before putting it in and after taking it out.



Overdose prevention:



- To prevent the spread of COVID- 19, keep 2 meters (6 feet) distance between you and other people – at all times.
- Do not use alone, you can still experience an overdose. Make sure someone is able to check in with you when you are using – this could be by phone (you could have a friend stay on the line with you while you use, or you could call the Overdose Prevention Line before you use at 1-888-853-8542), by video chat software, or in person with someone checking in on you sitting in the room far enough away.
- Continue to use supervised consumption sites – they remain open, though some may have reduced hours.
- If you are using alone, do a test dose first, and remember to go slowly.

Stock up on supplies:



- Stock up on supplies you might need.
- Get enough gear to last you a couple of weeks, and make sure you have naloxone.
- Fill your prescriptions, and if possible and safe for you to do so, try to stock up on a month's supply.
- If you are on methadone or suboxone, ask your provider about accessing carries to prevent you from having to go to the pharmacy every day.
- Prepare to go through unplanned withdrawals in case your dealer gets sick or the drug supply gets low. Ask your healthcare provider to help you get on OAT (methadone or suboxone) or for help getting the medications you might need during withdrawal.

Responding to an overdose:



- When responding to an overdose, be sure to use the gloves provided in your naloxone kit. Always safely dispose of used gloves in the trash after use, and wash your hands immediately.
- If you are comfortable providing chest compressions during an overdose, it is still safe to do so. DO NOT perform rescue breaths when responding to an overdose.
- It is important to call 9-1-1 as soon as the overdose happens. Because there is more demand on the medical system right now, first responders may take longer to arrive.
- Don't leave someone alone after they have experienced an overdose. They should be taken to hospital with paramedics, but if they do not go, make sure they are not alone for at least 2 hours after being given naloxone. During this time, try to stay 2 meters or 6 feet apart as much as possible.

If you feel unwell or have questions:

Visit OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Coronavirus for more information. If you do not have access to the internet, you can call Ottawa Public Health at 613-580-6744 or your regular healthcare provider.