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## Significant hike in reports of non-fatal overdoses

Since the beginning of July 2023, the Direction régionale de santé publique du CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal (DRSP de Montréal) has received a **record number of reports of non-fatal overdoses**. **Contributing factors could include the instability of the illicit substance market and the recent heatwave.**

Most of the overdoses are related to reported use of fentanyl (of many different colours). Many mixes containing different depressants have been analyzed (e.g., fentanyl with benzodiazepines, nitazenes and xylazine). Overdoses linked to Dilaudid pills (probably counterfeit) and crack have also been reported.

**Regardless of the substance used, naloxone is indicated when a person**

- **has difficulty breathing, makes a snore-like gurgling noise or is not breathing at all;**
- **has no reaction to sound or pain stimuli.**

The person may have cyanosis (bluish lips and fingernails) and miosis (pinpoint pupils). These symptoms are likely to cause *cardiopulmonary arrest*. In case of overdose, call 911 immediately for rapid, effective intervention. Hospitalization may be required for naloxone administration under medical supervision or for airway management.

Montréal public health urges street-drug users to be careful, **regardless of consumption method** (inhalation, injection or others), and encourages clinicians and care providers to increase overdose prevention interventions targeting users:

- 1. Inform drug users about the higher than usual number of severe overdoses**, potentially linked with **an increased presence of xylazine or nitazenes** in black-market fentanyl or with the **high heat felt over the past few days**.
- 2. Provide counselling on safer drug use practices:**
  - For people who inject, use [supervised consumption services](#) regularly.
  - **Avoid using alone.**
  - When using with other people, **don't all use at the same time.**
  - Use [drug checking services](#).
  - **Reduce the dose of a drug to test its effects.**
  - **Have naloxone close at hand** in large enough quantities and know how to use it if someone shows signs of overdose. In case of doubt, don't hesitate to use it (not dangerous even if it isn't necessary).
  - **Call 911** if there is an overdose (the *Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act* provides immunity from simple possession charges for anyone who calls 911 about an overdose).
- 3. Inform and, if needed, accompany users so they can obtain naloxone for free** in pharmacies and community organizations listed in the [INSPQ directory](#).

For more information:

<https://santemontreal.qc.ca/en/professionnels/drsp/sujets-de-a-a-z/surdoses/prevention-des-surdoses-liees-aux-drogues/>

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Source: Direction de santé publique du Montréal CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal 514-528-2400

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#### 4. Adapt services to prevent the effects of heat, especially when the perceived temperature is over 30 °C:

- Watch for signs of dehydration that can be similar to signs of overdose: confusion, dizziness, excessive sleepiness and extreme weakness.
- Make **drinking water (bottles, glasses) available**.
- Ensure spaces are cool and well ventilated. If possible, make available air-conditioned spaces where people can cool off.
- Inform individuals about preventing risks linked to heat and drug use:
  - Encourage people to **drink water regularly and before feeling thirsty** to prevent dehydration.
  - **Stay in the shade or in cool indoor areas (ideally with air conditioning)**.
  - Wear light, loose-fitting clothes.
  - **Take a cool shower every day**, or cool your skin often with a damp towel.
  - **Reduce intense physical efforts**.
  - Take special care with use of stimulants, which could aggravate the effects of heat by raising the body's temperature.
- Pay particular attention to people who are over 65 years old, live alone or have chronic diseases.
- [Information and tools on preventive measures relating to heat](#)

We urge you to be vigilant and to inform us of any unusual situation by using the [overdose reporting form](#).

For more information:

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