

EXTENDED COMMUNITY DRUG ALERT

25 suspected overdoses/ drug poisonings and 3 suspected drug-related deaths in Waterloo Region from August 14 to August 17

Issued: August 18, 2026

Expires: September 1, 2026

- This is an extension of the alert issued August 4.
- The street drug supply is highly toxic: **street drugs may be different than expected and may cause unexpected reactions.**
- **People who use unregulated (street) fentanyl may be at greater risk for overdose/ drug poisoning.** Sanguen's Drug Checking Program found*:
 - Fentanyl with high amounts of Medetomidine and other opioids (Para-fluorofentanyl and suspected Nitazenes)
 - Fentanyl with long-acting benzodiazepines (Flubromazepam and Gidazepam)
 - Fentanyl is stronger than expected

*more details below

There are reports of:

- **Complex overdoses.** Deep sleepiness (on the nod, heavily sedated) and a very low heart rate. These are signs to go to the hospital.
- **Complex withdrawal. Signs to go to the hospital:**
 - Throwing up a lot
 - Chest pain
 - Going in and out of awareness
 - Very high heart rate and blood pressure

IF SOMEONE OVERDOSES: Call 911. Give naloxone. Stay with them until help arrives.

STAY SAFER:

- Start low and go slow.
- Don't use drugs alone.
- Use around a trusted person and take turns so one person can help if an overdose happens.
- Use the National Overdose Response Service (NORS) at 1-888-688-6677.
- Test your drugs at Sanguen (226-789-1719).
- Carry naloxone and know how to use it.
- Avoid mixing drugs – use one drug at a time.

Get a Naloxone Kit



For locations to get free naloxone and harm reduction supplies, scan the QR code, visit regionofwaterloo.ca/harmreduction, or call 519-575-440

Get Support

[HART Hub Waterloo Region](#) is available for anyone experiencing homelessness and housing instability who is interested in support/ change around their addiction. 519-745-4404 x213

Drugs found through Sanguen Health Centre's Drug Checking Program

The drugs below were **found unexpectedly in fentanyl samples**. People who use unregulated (street) fentanyl may be at greater risk. **Opioids, tranquilizers, or benzodiazepine mixed with any of these drugs increases risk for overdose/ drug poisoning because their dangerous effects become stronger when they are together.**

Medetomidine

- **What is it?** [A strong sedative](#), like xylazine but much stronger. **Not an opioid.**
- **Effects:** Last a long time (90 minutes or several hours).
 - Deep sleepiness (on the nod, heavily sedated).
 - Passing out. People may be hard to wake up.
 - Slow breathing, heart rate, and blood pressure.
 - May cause hallucinations or confusion.
 - Dizziness, nausea, vomiting.
- **Medetomidine Withdrawal:** Can start quickly and be very serious. **Signs to go to the hospital:**
 - can't stop throwing up.
 - chest pain.
 - going in and out of awareness

Para-fluorofentanyl

- **What is it?** [Unregulated fentanyl-like drug \(opioid\)](#).
 - Test your drugs with fentanyl test strips. A positive result could mean para-fluorofentanyl or other types of fentanyl are in your drugs.
- **Effects:**
 - Deep sleepiness (on the nod, heavily sedated).
 - Passing out. People may be hard to wake up.
 - Slow breathing, heart rate, and blood pressure

Nitazenes

- **What is it?** A very strong unregulated opioid.
- Test your drugs with Nitazene test strips. A positive result could mean Nitazenes are in your drugs.
- **Effects:**
 - Deep sleepiness (on the nod, heavily sedated).
 - Passing out. People may be hard to wake up.
 - Slow breathing, heart rate, and blood pressure.
 - Very low or no pulse.

Fentanyl

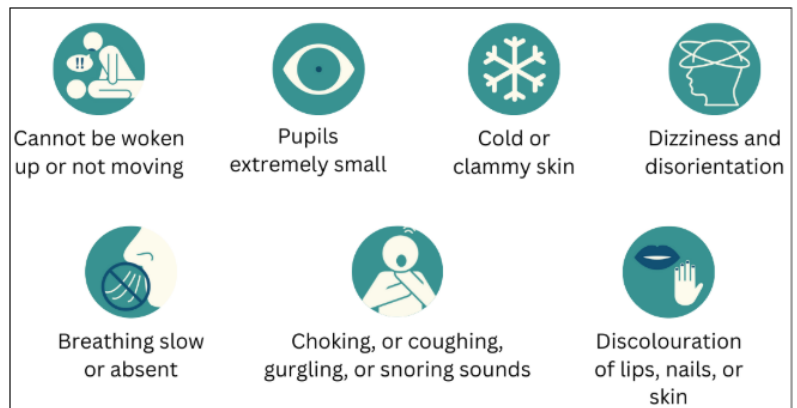
- **What is it?** [A strong opioid](#).
 - Test your drugs with fentanyl test strips. A positive result could mean fentanyl is in your drugs.
 - Fentanyl was found to be stronger than expected.
- **Effects:**
 - Slows breathing and heart rate.
 - People may be hard to wake up (heavily sedated).
 - Memory loss

Benzodiazepine (“benzo”) – including **Gidazepam** and **Flubromazepam**

- **What is it?** A strong sedative. Not an opioid.
 - **Flubromazepam** is a strong long-acting benzodiazepine. Effects are strong and last a long time
 - **Gidazepam** is a long-acting benzodiazepine. Effects may not be as strong as other benzodiazepines but last a lot longer.
- **Effects:**
 - Deep sleepiness (on the nod, heavily sedated).
 - Passing out. People may be hard to wake up.
 - Slow breathing, heart rate, and blood pressure.
 - Blackouts (memory loss).
 - Slurred speech, trouble focusing eyes, poor balance.

What to do:

- Stay with anyone on the nod and watch for [signs of an overdose](#).
- Follow the [5 steps to respond to an opioid overdose](#):
 1. **Shout** their name and shake their shoulders.
 2. **Call 911** if they won't wake up or if breathing is very slow or not at all.
 3. **Give naloxone.**
 - Fentanyl, para-fluorofentanyl, and nitazenes and are opioids. Naloxone will work on these drugs.
 - Medetomidine and benzodiazepines are not opioids. Naloxone cannot stop the effects of medetomidine or benzodiazepines. Give naloxone because it will work on opioids that may be mixed in the drugs.
 4. Check that the person is breathing regularly. They may not wake up right away. **Perform rescue breathing or give oxygen** if you can.
 5. Additional doses of naloxone may be needed. Give another dose every 2-3 minutes until breathing is back to normal.
- If they are very sedated (sleepy) but still breathing, encourage them to keep breathing.
- Stay with them until help arrives.



Scan the QR code to [sign up](#) to get community drug alerts for Waterloo Region to your inbox.



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