
Sustained high number of non-fatal overdoses and involvement of carfentanil in several suspected overdose deaths in Montreal

The Direction régionale de santé publique (DRSP) de Santé Québec Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal – Universitaire has received confirmation of **8 fatal overdoses involving carfentanil** since the overdose alert issued on April 9, 2026. This number may be underestimated due to the time it takes to receive confirmatory laboratory analysis. The **number of non-fatal overdoses associated with fentanyl use remains very high**, requiring emergency interventions, including numerous ambulance transports. Carfentanil is being regularly detected in mixtures sold as fentanyl, typically in the form of rocks of various colours. These mixtures also contain other fentanyl analogues, medetomidine, and, in some cases, benzodiazepines.

Fentanyl analogues, particularly carfentanil, are extremely toxic opioids that can be lethal at very low doses. Medetomidine is a sedative and analgesic used in veterinary medicine that has been circulating for several months in fentanyl mixtures. Benzodiazepines are sedative medications commonly used to treat anxiety and related conditions.

This reinforces the importance of **not using drugs alone** and ensuring that anyone accompanying a person who uses drugs has **naloxone readily available and knows how to administer it**. It is also recommended to **reduce usual doses**, as even a very small amount of these mixtures could cause an overdose.

Regardless of the substance consumed, naloxone is indicated when a person:

- **Has difficulty breathing, makes a snore-like gurgling noise or is not breathing at all;**
- **Reacts minimally or not at all to noise and pain.**

The person may present cyanosis (bluish lips and fingernails) and miosis (pinpoint pupils). These symptoms are likely to progress to **cardiorespiratory arrest**. In case of overdose, call 911 immediately for a rapid and effective intervention and administer naloxone if available. Hospital care may be required for naloxone administration under medical supervision or for airway management.

The DRSP de Montréal urges people who use drugs to be cautious, **regardless of mode of consumption** (inhalation, injection, or other). We also encourage clinicians and care providers to reinforce overdose prevention:

1. Inform people who use drugs of the risks of consuming fentanyl;

2. Provide counselling on safer drug use practices:

- **Avoid using alone** (or, notify someone and stay in contact when using, e.g. **National Overdose Response Service (NORS) 1-888-688-6677**, Remote Service for Overdose Prevention (**RSOP) 1-800-265-2626, option 2**);
- When several people are using, **avoid using all at the same time**;
 - o Make sure to stay with the person and provide regular stimulation in the hours that follow: the person must remain arousable at all times (snoring = warning sign);
- **Have naloxone available** 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 (naloxone is not dangerous even if it isn't necessary);
- **Reduce the dose of a drug to test its effects**;
- Use [supervised consumption services](#);
- Use [drug checking services](#). (Carfentanil may not be detected.);
- **Call 911** in the event of an overdose (the *Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act* provides immunity from prosecution for simple possession to overdose witnesses who have called 911).

3. Provide information and support, as needed, to help people obtain free naloxone from pharmacies and community organizations listed in the [INSPQ directory](#).

We urge you to be vigilant and to inform us of any unusual situation by using the [fiche de signalement de surdose](#).

[Surdose | Direction régionale de santé publique de Montréal \(santepubliquemontreal.ca\)](#)

Source: Direction régionale de santé publique du Montréal – Santé Québec Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal – Universitaire : 514-528-2400
