SKYLARK

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THIS IS NOT A PHASE

A HARM REDUCTION NEWSLETTER

OPIOID CRISIS

THIS ISSUE EXPLORES OPIOID-USE TRENDS AMONGST YOUTH AND HOW WE CAN RESPOND AS SERVICE PROVIDERS!

THE WHO, WHAT, HOW & WHY?

WHO?
Youth age 15-24 have the highest self-reported past-year use of illicit substances compared to any other age group in Canada. In the 2015 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, an estimated 10% of students in grades 7 to 12 used opioid pain relievers without a prescription—almost 95,000 youth in Ontario alone. Psychoactive pharmaceuticals are the third most commonly-used substances, after alcohol and marijuana, among Canadian youth.

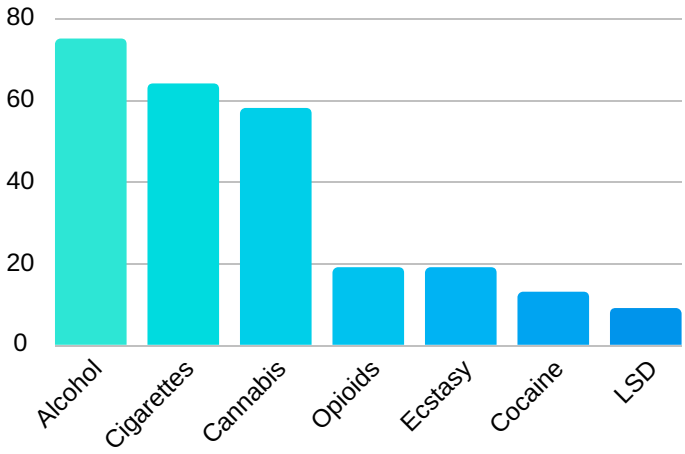
A HARM REDUCTION RESPONSE

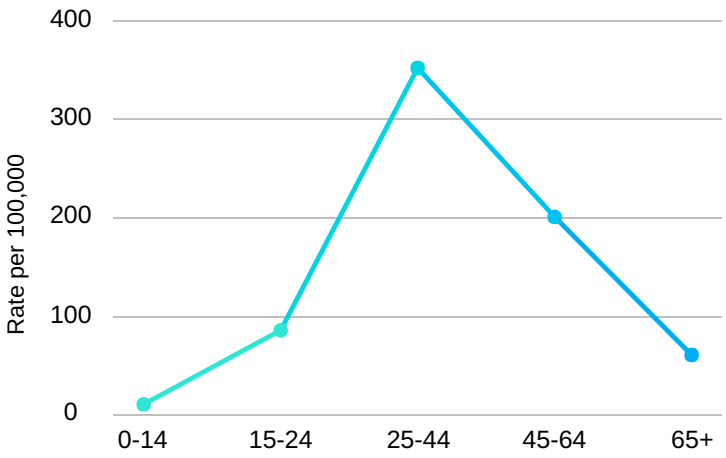
Regardless if a young person is knowingly using opioids or vulnerable to accidental overdose through drug tampering or cross-contamination, a harm reduction strategy is the best way to effectively support and protect young people from the risk of overdose. Therefore, rather than practicing "just say no", try practicing "just say know."

The following strategies have been adapted from www.knowyoursource.ca;

THE STATISTICS

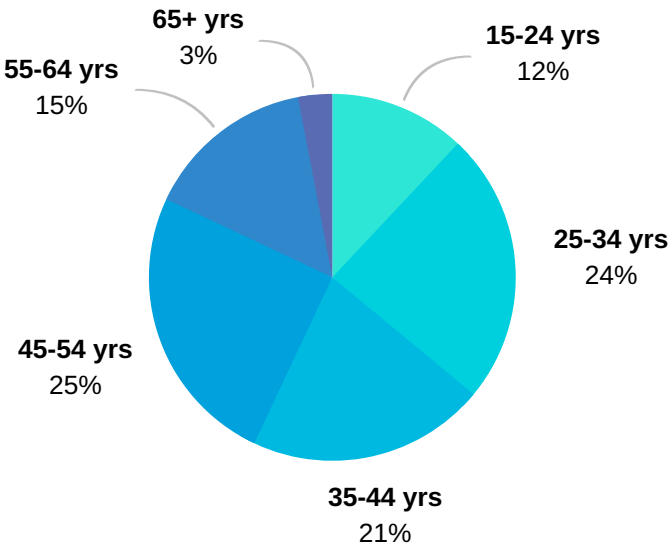
Percentage of Ontario Students (Gr. 9-12) Reporting it is 'Fairly Easy' or 'Very Easy' to Obtain the Drug, 2015, OSDUHS.





Rates of Opioid-Related Emergency Department visits by Age Group, Toronto Public Health 2016

Distribution of Opioid-Related Accidental Deaths by Age Group in Ontario in 2015, ODPRN 2017



1. Boak, A., Hamilton, H. A., Adlaf, E. M., & Mann, R. E., (2015). Drug use among Ontario students, 1977-2015: OSDUHS highlights (CAMH Research Document Series No. 42). Toronto, ON: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.
2. http://www.publichealthontario.ca
3. Gomes T, Greaves S, Martins D, et al. Latest Trends in Opioid-Related Deaths in Ontario: 1991 to 2015. Toronto: Ontario Drug Policy Research Network; April 2017.

THE WHO, WHAT, HOW & WHY?

WHAT?
Opioids include drugs such as heroin, morphine, fentanyl and codeine. Some, such as morphine, are natural, derived from plants including the opium poppy. Some are created in a lab from natural ingredients such as oxycodone and heroin. Totally manmade opioids include fentanyl and methadone. Opioids bind to receptors in the body, mimicking natural "feel-good" chemicals produced by our bodies such as endorphins but with much, much more powerful effects. However, Fentanyl is 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine and 100 times more potent than heroin.

HOW?
Young people may not be aware that what they are taking contains Fentanyl. Fentanyl has been found in many other drugs like heroin, cocaine and oxycodone. In fact, buyers often think they're buying Oxy when they're really getting Fentanyl. The drug has no smell or taste, and you can't see it so there is no way to tell if other drugs have been laced with it or cross-contaminated. If Fentanyl is ingested, it is so strong that as little as two milligrams can cause an overdose. After ingestion it can reach the brain within minutes and cause respiratory failure.

WHY?
Young people may choose prescription drugs over other drugs for a number of reasons. They may have a misperception that prescription drugs are less dangerous than other drugs because they can be prescribed by a doctor. Compared to illegal drugs, prescription drugs may be seen as more attractive for young people because these drugs are legal. Also, young people may find getting prescription drugs easier than getting other drugs. For many, substance use involves obtaining drugs from a friend, a relative or from home.

"FENTANYL IS 50-100X STRONGER THAN MORPHINE AND 100X STRONGER THAN HEROIN.

A HARM REDUCTION RESPONSE

- EDUCATE YOURSELF!
  Be informed of the complexity of reasons that young people use substances so that you can offer non-judgmental, non-stigmatizing support. Blaming and shaming someone for their use or insisting that they stop is not an effective way to support someone. If a young person has disclosed their substance use to you and has not identified it as a problem, they are unlikely to respond to fear tactics or abstinent requirements. It is much more likely that they will take the suggestions of someone who provides information in a non-stigmatizing manner.

- BE TRANSPARENT
  Educate young people about the risks and benefits of opioid use. Offer information on potential cross-contamination and drug tampering so that youth are fully informed about the decisions they make.

- # 1 GO SLOW
  Start with a test dose. Even if you believe you have a higher tolerance, starting small is an easy way to prevent accidental overdose!

- # 2 DON'T MIX DRUGS
  Poly-drug use is a common way for young people to lose track of their tolerance level and raises risk of overdosing.

- # 3 THE BUDDY SYSTEM
  Always use in the company of another person or ask someone to check in with you after 10 minutes.

- # 4 USE NEW EQUIPMENT
  If you are smoking or injecting the substance, always use sterile equipment. Safe Use Kits are available at various locations in Toronto.

- # 5 MAKE A SAFETY PLAN
  Plan ahead by discussing how to respond in case of an overdose.

- # 6 CARRY NALOXONE!
  Naloxone is the quickest and most effective way to reverse an overdose. Naloxone is easy to use and is free to access.

  For more information, please visit www.knowyoursource.ca