



INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
BC Coroners Service

Illicit drug deaths show decline for first half of 2019

VICTORIA – The BC Coroners Service has published updated reports on illicit drug toxicity deaths and fentanyl-detected drug deaths to the end of June 2019.

Key preliminary findings of these drug death reports are below. Data are subject to change:

- In June 2019, there were 73 suspected illicit drug toxicity deaths, a 35% decrease from the number of deaths in June 2018 (113), and a 15% decrease from the number of deaths occurring in May 2019 (86).
- There were approximately 2.4 illicit drug toxicity deaths per day in June 2019.
- For the first six months of 2019, there were 538 illicit drug toxicity deaths, a decrease of approximately 30% over the same six-month period in 2018 when 763 were reported.
- In 2019, 71% of those dying were aged 30 to 59 years. Individuals aged 19 to 59 years have accounted for 89% of all illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2019.
- Males accounted for 78% of all suspected illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2019.
- By local health area, the rates of illicit drug toxicity deaths are highest in Princeton, Merritt, Vancouver (aggregate), Grand Forks and Hope (see Table 16 in report for details).
- Fentanyl was detected in more than four of every five illicit drug toxicity deaths in 2018 and 2019.
- After higher levels of carfentanil detection in the first four months of 2019, peaking at 32 deaths in March. There were decreases in the numbers of deaths with carfentanil detected in May (13) and June (four).
- No deaths have been reported at supervised consumption sites or drug overdose prevention sites.

Here are some tips to help respond to overdoses, promote harm reduction and raise awareness about treatment options available:

- Always carry a naloxone kit, even if you do not use drugs. Call 911 if you see an overdose.
- If using drugs, have them checked if you can and never use alone. Use at a supervised consumption site or overdose prevention site if you can.
- If you think you might have a substance-use disorder, talk to your health provider about treatments that are available.

Learn More:

Illicit drug overdose death report:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/coroners-service/statistical/illicit-drug.pdf>

Fentanyl-detected death report:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/coroners-service/statistical/fentanyl-detected-overdose.pdf>

Toward the Heart: www.towardtheheart.com

BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) Overdose Response Indicators:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/data-reports/overdose-response-indicators>

BCCDC Illegal Drug Overdose Events report:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/data-reports/illegal-drug-overdose-events>

Contact:

Andy Watson

Manager, Strategic Communications

BC Coroners Service

250 356-9253

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