

REMEMBER: People who use substances, and the people in their lives, often have weaker immune systems, respiratory (breathing) problems, and other conditions that place them at a higher risk of getting COVID-19 infection.

Help keep everybody safe by following this advice.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

YOU HAVE A HIGHER RISK OF BECOMING SERIOUSLY ILL OR DYING:

- COVID-19 infection worsens breathing impacts of opioids, benzos & alcohol
- Opioid withdrawal may worsen breathing difficulties
- Smoking **any substance** makes breathing problems worse

COVID-19 MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO BREATHE:

COVID-19 infection makes it harder to inhale smoke. Smoking substances (like crack or meth), cigarettes, or vapes will worsen breathing problems.

IF YOU THINK YOU'RE GETTING SICK:

DO NOT go to your local harm reduction and addictions programs - **HAVE THEM DELIVER SUPPLIES TO YOU.** Tell them you are sick so they can take steps to keep themselves safe.

BE READY TO GO THROUGH INVOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL:

Your dealer might get sick or the substances supply might be disrupted.

- Try to be prepared by stocking up. Make sure you have all the necessary *medications, food, and drinks* needed to help detox. Try to have protein-based and electrolyte drinks like Pedialyte or Ensure on hand.
- Talk to a medical provider about starting methadone or buprenorphine.

BE AWARE: Some early symptoms of withdrawal and COVID-19 infection are similar. These include fever and muscle soreness. If symptoms include a *persistent cough*, it could be COVID-19.

STOCK UP ON THINGS YOU MAY NEED TO MANAGE YOUR SUBSTANCE USE AND PRACTICE HARM REDUCTION

SUBSTANCES: If you are able, stock up on your substance(s) of choice before things get worse. AVOID BINGEING on extra substances so that you have access to a supply and do not go through withdrawal. Try to buy from people you trust and have as many WAYS TO CONTACT DEALERS in your area as possible.

ALCOHOL: If you are able, stock up on enough alcohol to last a few weeks. AVOID BINGEING on extra alcohol so that you have access to enough to avoid withdrawal. Try to avoid bootleg alcohol. **TIP:** try managing your use by limiting yourself to one can of beer, 1.5 ounces of hard liquor, or 5 ounces of wine per hour as needed.

SUPPLIES THAT REDUCE INFECTION: If you are able, stock up on cleaning supplies, alcohol wipes, and supplies to treat abscesses and open wounds. Get a Sharps container to dispose used syringes.

NALOXONE: Make sure that you have access to naloxone in the event of an unintentional overdose. Emergency services are likely to take longer than usual during a pandemic.

METHADONE & BUPRENORPHINE: Check with your medical provider to see if services might be changing. **Let your program know if you have a pre-existing condition that puts you at a higher risk of infection.** Ask your program about options to continue your treatment at home.

REMEMBER: PRACTICING HARM REDUCTION CAN HELP YOU AVOID COVID-19 INFECTION AND REDUCE YOUR RISK OF GETTING SICK. PUT YOUR HEALTH FIRST.

OTHER HARM REDUCTION TIPS:

CLEAN YOUR HANDS AFTER HANDLING MONEY OR SUBSTANCES:

Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer or wipes (at least 60% alcohol).

DON'T SHARE YOUR SUBSTANCES OR SUBSTANCE USE SUPPLIES:

Don't handle or touch other peoples' substances or supplies; and don't let them touch yours. Avoid sharing or splitting during this time and **prepare your own substances.**

CLEAN EVERYTHING REGULARLY:

Use alcohol-based wipes or cleaners to disinfect as much as you can. Make sure to clean your substance use equipment, especially smoking supplies that go in your mouth. Also clean your substance packages, and do not carry them in your mouth, vagina, or anus.

AVOID INJECTING ALONE:

Substance supplies continue to be toxic, try to lower your risk of overdose. Try not to use alone, especially if you inject substances that contain or may have come in contact with heroin or fentanyl

- **Stay at least six feet away from other people**, coughing or sneezing into your arm, avoiding touching your face, and washing your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.
- **Call someone**, preferably nearby, and ask them to stay on the line while you are injecting so they can act or call 9-1-1 if you become unresponsive.

ALTERNATIVES IF YOUR SYRINGES ARE NO LONGER SAFE:

Be aware that these can make COVID-19 symptoms worse.

- **Smoke it** – keep in mind that this may be difficult to do with some substances, and that COVID-19 affects the respiratory system
- **Swallow it** – swallowing heroin and fentanyl results in a morphine effect but stops withdrawal
- **Snort it** – chop your substance into a fine powder and sniff slowly
- **Booty bump it** – dissolve your substance in citric or ascorbic acid, put it in a needleless syringe, and squirt it up your bum/anus. You need **LESS** when booty bumping. Onset takes longer but the high also lasts longer.

IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING SYMPTOMS OR THINK YOU MAY HAVE COVID-19:

DO NOT GO TO A LOCAL CLINIC OR HARM REDUCTION PROGRAM. INSTEAD, GET TESTED FOR COVID-19 AND GET FURTHER MEDICAL ADVICE BY CALLING:

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health: 1-800-265-7293 ext. 7006

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health after hours: 1-877-884-8653

Region of Waterloo Public Health Services: 519-575-4400

Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

How to self-isolate

Stay home

- Do not use public transportation, taxis or rideshares.
- Do not go to work, school or other public places.
- Your health care provider or public health unit will tell you when it is safe to leave.



Limit the number of visitors in your home

- Only have visitors who you must see and keep the visits short.
- Keep away from seniors and people with chronic medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, lung problems, immune deficiency).



Avoid contact with others

- Stay in a separate room away from other people in your home as much as possible and use a separate bathroom if you have one.
- Make sure that shared rooms have good airflow (e.g. open windows).



Keep distance

- If you are in a room with other people, keep a distance of at least two metres and wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth.
- If you cannot wear a mask, people should wear a mask when they are in the same room as you.

