

Summary Report

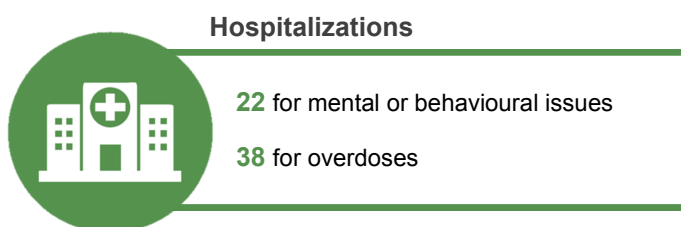
Opioid Use in Halton

Opioid use is an important public health issue that has received increased attention in recent years. Opioids are a class of drugs that includes illegal drugs (such as heroin), as well as prescription drugs used to treat pain (such as morphine and oxycodone). Rates of opioid prescribing have been increasing in Canada,¹ and there are concerns over the presence of powerful opioids like fentanyl in street drugs.² This report examines opioid-related emergency department (ED) visits and hospitalizations (between 2013 and 2015), as well as drug overdose deaths among Halton Region residents (between 2011 and 2015). ED visits and hospitalizations are categorized into opioid-related mental/behavioural issues (such as intoxication, dependence, and withdrawal) and opioid overdoses (poisoning).

It is not possible to assess all opioid use in Halton. Examining opioid use that results in an ED visit, hospitalization, or death can still provide insight into trends over time and who may be more likely to use opioids in the region. It is also important to consider that even with any observed increases, opioid-related issues still account for only a small fraction of the many health concerns resulting in ED visits, hospitalizations, and deaths among Halton residents, such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, and falls.

For more information on opioid use in Halton Region, please view the full length [Halton Opioid Report](#).

Each year* in Halton, opioid use resulted in:

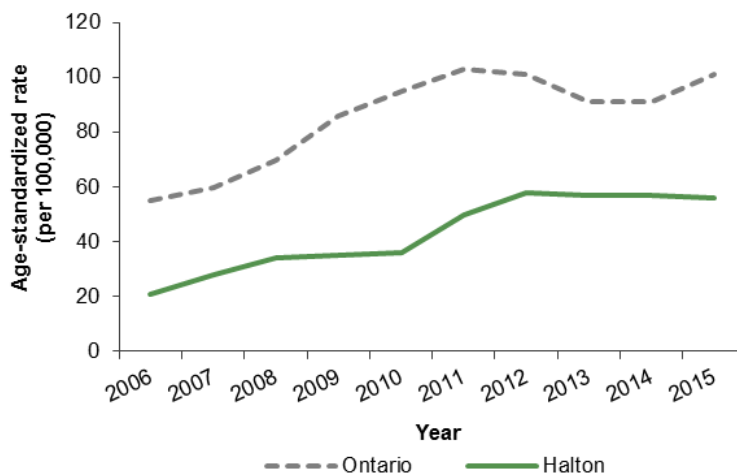


*Average per year 2013-2015

Trends over time

Opioid-related ED visits have been increasing in Halton and Ontario over the past ten years.

Between 2006 and 2015 there was an approximate doubling of rates for opioid-related ED visits in both Halton and Ontario. Since the rates started lower in Halton, Halton is only now reaching the level of where Ontario was ten years ago. The rates of opioid-related hospitalizations follow a similar trend (data not shown).



Age-standardized rate (per 100,000) of opioid-related ED visits, ages 15 and over, Halton and Ontario, 2006-2015.

Halton versus Ontario



- ▶ Halton's rate of opioid-related emergency department (ED) visits in Halton was only half as high as Ontario's rate.

Sex

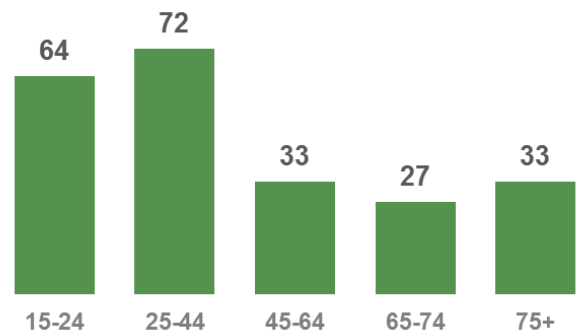


In Halton, the rate of opioid-related ED visits was approximately 1.6 times higher among males compared to females.

Age

- ▶ When looking at the annual number of opioid-related ED visits from 2013 to 2015, there was an average of 46 ED visits among youth and young adults aged 15-24, 154 ED visits among adults aged 25-64, and 23 ED visits among older adults aged 65 and over (data not shown).

Taking population size into account, the age-specific rate of opioid-related ED visits in Halton between 2013 and 2015 was highest among adults aged 25-44 (72 per 100,000), followed by youth and young adults aged 15-24 (64 per 100,000). All older age groups had lower rates of opioid-related ED visits (see figure).



Opioid-related ED visits, age-specific rates (per 100,000), ages 15 and over, Halton Region, 2013-2015 combined.

Deaths

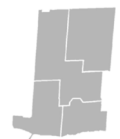


According to the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario, between 2011 and 2015, there was an average of 13 deaths involving opioid toxicity per year in Halton. On average, two of these deaths per year involved fentanyl.

In comparison, on average, about 2,800 Halton residents die each year from all causes.

Location

Municipality: All Halton municipalities had significantly lower rates of opioid-related ED visits compared to Ontario.



Neighbourhood income: The rate of opioid-related ED visits was highest among the low income neighbourhood group, but middle and high income neighbourhood group residents accounted for the greatest number of visits.



References:

1. Gomes, T., Mamdani, M.M., Paterson, J.M., Dhalla, I.A., & Juurlink, D.N. (2014). Trends in high-dose opioid prescribing in Canada. *Can Fam Physician*, 60: 826-832.
2. Howlett, K., Giovannetti, J., Vanderklippe, N., & Perreux, L. (2016). "How Canada got addicted to fentanyl." *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved September 2, 2016 from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/investigations/a-killer-high-how-canada-got-addicted-tofentanyl/article29570025/>

For more information on data sources and limitations please view the full [Halton Opioid Report](#).