

HALTON REGION HEALTH DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE ASSOCIATE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
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TO: Halton Physicians

Medical Chiefs of Staff: Joseph Brant Hospital, Halton Healthcare (Oakville, Milton and Georgetown Hospitals)
Chairs of: Family Practice, Paediatrics, Internal Medicine, Emergency, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Surgery
Chief of Laboratory Services and Infection Control Practitioners
Halton Midwives

POST IN: Emergency Department and Physicians Lounge

FROM: Dr. Julie Emili, Associate Medical Officer of Health

DATE: July 5, 2019

RE: Carfentanil Alert

This e-fax is to update you about information regarding carfentanil in Ontario that was shared by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. David Williams. Recent data suggests an increase of carfentanil presence in Ontario in the past few months.

There has been a sharp increase in the number of urine broad spectrum toxicology screen samples from LifeLabs that have tested positive for carfentanil in Ontario, from a range of 0-100 per month in 2017/2018 to over 700 in each of April and May 2019. This increase in carfentanil-positive samples occurred across many Ontario regions. These data represent only samples from people accessing testing in LifeLabs.

In addition, the Chief Coroner for Ontario, Dr. Dirk Huyer, has informed the Chief Medical Officer of Health that preliminary mortality data show an increase in carfentanil-related deaths in Ontario in the first four months of 2019. Specifically, carfentanil directly contributed to 142 deaths between January 1 and April 29, 2019 which is already 50% more than the total number of deaths in which carfentanil directly contributed in all of 2018, which were 95 deaths. In Halton, seven opioid-related deaths occurred in which carfentanil was present at death from May 2017 to December 2018, which is our most recent data.

Carfentanil is a synthetic fentanyl analogue. Data on carfentanil potency are limited, but best evidence suggests that carfentanil is significantly more potent than fentanyl. Carfentanil use could therefore be associated with increased risk of overdose and death compared with use of other opioids.

Please share the following key messages with patients who use drugs to raise awareness of carfentanil in the drug supply:

- Don't use alone.
- Do a test dose first.
- Don't use opioids with alcohol or other drugs.
- When using with others, do not use at the same time.
- Access opioid treatments (e.g. Suboxone or Methadone).
- Carry Naloxone: Get FREE naloxone kits. You may need many doses.
- Call 911 for every overdose.
- CPR Push hard, push fast.

Please report all suspected or confirmed cases of [Diseases of Public Health Significance](#) (formerly Reportable Diseases) to the Halton Region Health Department as soon as possible. Diseases marked * should be reported immediately by telephone (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) or fax (Mon-Fri, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm only). Other diseases can be reported the next working day. Call 311, 905-825-6000 or toll free at 1-866-442-5866. For general information, please visit halton.ca.

If any link provided in this memo does not work, please cut and paste it into your web browser.