

## What's going on with benzo-dope in Toronto?

July 4, 2025

Since [Toronto's Drug Checking Service](#) launched in 2019, we've consistently found benzodiazepine-related drugs contaminating Toronto's unregulated fentanyl supply. The combination of these drugs is known to many as benzo-dope.

Over the past 5+ years:

- We've found [17 different benzodiazepine-related drugs in the fentanyl samples](#) we've checked.
- We've found [benzodiazepine-related drugs in 1 of every 2 fentanyl samples](#) on average each month.

Despite finding a "new" benzodiazepine-related drug in Toronto's unregulated fentanyl supply late last year ([ethylbromazolam](#)), we have observed a sharp decrease in the number of fentanyl samples containing benzodiazepine-related drugs since August 2024.

Between June 10 and 30, 2025, we didn't find benzodiazepine-related drugs in any of the fentanyl samples we checked.

At this time, our data shows that benzodiazepine-related drugs are being replaced by veterinary tranquilizers [medetomidine](#) and [xylazine](#) in Toronto's unregulated fentanyl supply. Many people refer to the combination of xylazine and/or medetomidine and fentanyl as tranq-dope. Like benzodiazepine-related drugs, veterinary tranquilizers are also central nervous system and/or respiratory depressants. Using high-potency opioids in combination with other central nervous and/or respiratory system depressants:

- Increases the risk of dangerous suppression of vitals, such as slowing down of breathing, blood pressure, heart rate.
- Complicates overdose response.

While benzo-dope increases the risk of harm and overdose for those using it, benzodiazepine-related drugs leaving the unregulated fentanyl supply has risks too. For example, since benzo-dope has been so common, many people who use fentanyl could also be dependent on benzodiazepine-related drugs. Suddenly stopping the use of benzodiazepine-related drugs could lead to life-threatening withdrawal.

We are continuing to monitor this trend and will keep the community informed as we learn more. To interact with our data, visit [www.drugchecking.community](http://www.drugchecking.community).

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**About Toronto’s Drug Checking Service and Ontario’s Drug Checking Community:** Ontario’s Drug Checking Community, for which Toronto’s Drug Checking Service is the flagship program, is a national leader in drug checking service delivery and community-led unregulated drug market monitoring and education. It involves implementing the offsite drug checking model designed and in use by Toronto’s Drug Checking Service since 2019 in other jurisdictions across the province. The primary reason for doing so is to inform evidence-based responses to the worsening toxic drug supply crisis by educating people who use drugs, community health workers, public health units, clinicians, first responders, policy makers, public servants, forensic science and toxicology laboratories, coroners, researchers, and others about what’s circulating in the unregulated drug supply and anticipated harms.

Collection site members in Toronto: Casey House | Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre (Parkdale and Queen West sites) | South Riverdale Community Health Centre (KeepSix and Moss Park sites) | Street Health | The Neighbourhood Group (Kensington Market Overdose Prevention Site) | Toronto Shelter and Support Services (Seaton House Overdose Prevention Site)

Analysis site members: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (Clinical Laboratory and Diagnostic Services) | St. Michael’s Hospital (Department of Laboratory Medicine and Drug Checking Unit)

Our program is coordinated by a small central team that operates from within the Drug Checking Unit at St. Michael’s Hospital. The central team is responsible for conducting unregulated drug market monitoring and developing and disseminating relevant drug information.

**Our work would not be possible if people who use drugs did not donate their drugs to our program in an effort to reduce the harms associated with using unregulated substances and facilitate community-led drug market monitoring and education.**

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