

Results from samples checked by Toronto's drug checking service

June 4 – 17, 2022

Key findings

- 140 samples were checked: 79% were substances¹ and 21% were used equipment²
- 66% of the samples checked were expected³ to be fentanyl, cocaine, or MDMA
- 13% of the expected³ fentanyl samples checked were known to be associated with an overdose: all contained fentanyl, some contained carfentanil, and about half contained other central nervous system and respiratory depressants, like benzodiazepine-related drugs or xylazine
- 55% of the expected³ fentanyl samples checked contained benzodiazepine-related drug(s) and/or xylazine. Of those:
 - 31% contained benzodiazepine-related drug(s) *and* xylazine
 - 38% contained *only* benzodiazepine-related drug(s)
 - 31% contained *only* xylazine
- 9% of the expected³ fentanyl samples checked contained carfentanil
- 4% of the expected³ fentanyl samples checked contained AMB-FUBINACA, a synthetic cannabinoid reported to be hundreds of times stronger than THC (synthetic cannabinoids have been known to suppress breathing and other vitals during overdose situations)
- Just one expected³ fentanyl sample checked contained a nitazene opioid (compared to upwards of 20% of expected³ fentanyl samples checked in weeks prior)
- Note that quantified results (i.e., how much of the total sample submitted is a specific drug) could not be reported this period

Expected fentanyl substances

- 85% (29) of expected³ fentanyl substances checked⁴ **contained fentanyl and other drugs**, including:
 - 83% (24) contained caffeine
 - 83% (24) contained despropionyl fentanyl (4-ANPP) (!)
 - 52% (15) contained cocaine
 - 38% (11) contained xylazine (!)
 - 34% (10) contained a benzodiazepine-related drug (!):
 - 24% (7) contained flualprazolam (!)

- 17% (5) contained flubromazepam (!)
- 14% (4) contained etizolam (!)
- 10% (3) contained deschloroetizolam (!)
- 14% (4) contained carfentanil (!)
- 7% (2) contained furanyl UF-17 (opioid-related) (!)

Unexpected noteworthy drugs found in other expected substances

- 10% (8) of the remaining substances checked,⁴ meaning substances that weren't expected³ to be fentanyl, **contained an unexpected noteworthy drug**, including:
 - 18% (3) of **expected cocaine substances** contained phenacetin (!)
 - 6% (1) of **expected cocaine substances** contained levamisole (!)
 - 100% (1) of **expected crack cocaine substances** contained phenacetin (!)
 - One **expected benzodiazepine substance that did not contain benzodiazepine-related drugs** contained carfentanil (!), fentanyl (!), and xylazine (!)
 - One **expected benzodiazepine substance that did not contain benzodiazepine-related drugs** contained fentanyl (!)
 - One **expected benzodiazepine substance** contained fentanyl (!) and several benzodiazepine-related drugs (!)

Notes

1 | Substances: Two types of samples are accepted by Toronto's drug checking service: substances and used drug equipment. Substances could be a small amount of powder, crystals, or rocks, a crushed bit of a pill, blotter, or a small amount of liquid.

2 | Used equipment: Two types of samples are accepted by Toronto's drug checking service: substances and used drug equipment. Used equipment could be a used cooker or filter, or leftover liquid from a syringe.

3 | Expected (drug): When a sample is submitted to be checked, the drug that sample was bought or got as is recorded. We call it the "expected drug". Knowing the expected drug helps us tailor our harm reduction advice. It also helps us understand contamination to drugs rather than combinations of drugs (e.g., fentanyl was found in a cocaine sample rather than fentanyl and cocaine were found together).

4 | Reason for reporting only substance samples: While Toronto's drug checking service checks both substances and used equipment, drug equipment – like cookers – are often re-used. The mass spectrometry technologies used for this drug checking service are so sensitive that very trace amounts of drugs may be found. This means that when equipment is re-used, drugs from past use may present in the

results for the sample that is being checked. This can interfere with up-to-date drug supply monitoring, so we've noted when we exclude used equipment from this report.

5 | Average amount of drugs found: Toronto's drug checking service can report the amount of fentanyl, cocaine, carfentanil, etizolam, and caffeine found as a proportion of the total sample submitted for expected opioid, cocaine, crack cocaine, and some other powder substance samples. Every other week, we include the average (median) amount of fentanyl, cocaine, carfentanil, etizolam, and caffeine found in expected fentanyl substances in our report. More information is available on [our website](#).

6 | Isotonitazene/protonitazene: Because isotonitazene and protonitazene have a very similar chemical structure, it is not currently possible for Toronto's drug checking service to differentiate between the two. For this reason, we report the two drugs together.

(!) | Unexpected noteworthy drug: "Noteworthy drugs" are drugs that (i) are linked to overdose or other adverse effects, (ii) are highly potent or related to highly potent drugs, or (iii) may not be desired by some service users. Noteworthy drugs are flagged when they are unexpectedly found in checked samples.

Toronto's drug checking service is a public health service that aims to reduce the harms associated with substance use and, specifically, to prevent overdose by offering people who use drugs timely and detailed information on the contents of their drugs. Beyond educating individual service users, results for all samples are combined, analyzed, and publicly disseminated every other week to communicate drug market trends and inform care for people who use drugs, advocacy, policy, and research. [Sign up](#) to receive reports, alerts, and other information on Toronto's unregulated drug supply.

(e) drugchecking@cdpe.org | (t) [@drugpolicyctr](https://twitter.com/drugpolicyctr) | (f) facebook.com/centreondrugpolicyevaluation

