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Drug Use During Festival Season

Summertime is here and so are your favourite festivals! Canada's music festivals and other events and parties are a great way to have fun with friends and enjoy the warm weather. While celebrating, it is important to keep safety in mind, especially if you or someone you know chooses to use drugs or alcohol.

Here are some tips that can help reduce the potential harms associated with drugs and alcohol.

What you should do

Understand that any illegal drug can be tainted with other dangerous substances, such as fentanyl and carfentanil, which can be deadly.

Be aware that people who use drugs and alcohol can be at an increased risk of sexual assault.

Never leave your drink unattended and do not accept drinks, even water, from someone you don't know.

Do not mix drugs or mix drugs with alcohol.

Never use drugs alone and stay with your friends and people you trust.

If you are checking your drugs with a test kit, know that test kits have limitations for detecting dangerous substances.

Talk to your teen about the dangers of drugs.

If someone looks unwell or you suspect is having an overdose:

Do not leave someone alone if they seem ill. Stay with them and immediately call for help from volunteers and emergency contacts.

Call 9-1-1 or your local emergency help line if you think someone is having a drug overdose.

Carry naloxone, which can temporarily reverse an opioid overdose, if you or someone you know uses drugs. If you are with someone who is having an opioid overdose, follow the directions on the naloxone kit and administer it right away. Many community organizations or local public health units offer training in the proper use of naloxone. Administering naloxone won't hurt someone who isn't overdosing.

Stay until help arrives. The Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act provides certain legal protections for individuals who seek emergency help during an overdose situation and who are in possession of illegal drugs themselves.

Get your opioid overdose wallet card and carry it with you. Know what to do.

Recognize the signs of an opioid overdose:

It is estimated that there were approximately 4,000 opioid-

related deaths in Canada in 2017, compared to 3,000 deaths in 2016. Learn the signs of an opioid overdose: difficulty walking and talking; very small pupils; cold and clammy skin; slow and weak breathing; choking; and extreme drowsiness or inability to wake up.

Festival organizers

Inform your volunteers and festival goers of tips that can help reduce the potential for harm while using drugs and alcohol. A number of resources, including the opioid awareness wallet card, are available for free from Health Canada. Use them and distribute them widely. You may be saving a life!

Federal Action on Opioids

The growing number of overdoses and deaths caused by opioids (powerful pain relieving drugs) is a national public health crisis. The Minister of Health has made addressing this crisis a top priority.

The Government of Canada is taking a leadership role by using all of its available tools. We are working with provinces, territories and other partners across the country to take a collaborative approach to the crisis. On November 18 and 19, 2016, the Minister of Health brought together health partners to

commit to joint action. The Joint Statement of Action to Address the Opioid Crisis outlines the combined commitment of over 30 partner organizations to respond to this crisis. The statement was created as a result of the Opioid Conference and Summit.

What is the opioid crisis?

The opioid crisis can be linked to the rapid rise in rates of drug overdoses and death involving both:

- prescription opioids; and
- increasingly toxic illegal drugs due to the increased presence of powerful illegal substances, such as fentanyl, a drug 50-100 times more potent than morphine.

Anyone who uses drugs can be at risk of an overdose, including those who:

- are struggling with problematic substance use
- use drugs occasionally in a recreational context are trying an illegal drug for the first time
- are not strictly following their health care professionals' instructions

What is the Government of Canada doing about the opioid crisis?

Under the Joint Statement of Action to Address the Opioid Crisis, Health Canada committed to take new action across the Health Portfolio. The Health Portfolio's actions

to address the opioid crisis complement the Government of Canada's overall approach to drug policy, which is: collaborative, compassionate, comprehensive, evidence-based

These values are reflected in our Canadian drugs and substances strategy. Led by the Minister of Health, this strategy is a balanced and health-focused approach to drug policy, involving:

- a strong foundation in evidence the restoration of harm reduction, prevention, treatment, enforcement
- The Government of Canada is committed to taking action on Canada's opioid crisis through a targeted public health emergency response and through:
 - Prevention
 - Treatment
 - Harm reduction

Apparent opioid-related deaths

Canada continues to experience a serious and growing opioid crisis. Across the country, it is having devastating effects on families and communities.

The Government of Canada works closely with the provinces and territories to collect and share data on apparent opioid-related deaths. The data are updated four times a year and may

change based on review and refinement.

Trends

According to updated and available preliminary data on apparent opioid-related deaths in 2017:

National and regional trends The opioid epidemic has affected every part of the country; however, certain regions have been impacted more than others. There were 3,987 apparent opioid-related deaths in Canada in 2017 of which 92% were accidental (unintentional).

Sex and age trends

Most (78%) accidental apparent opioid-related deaths occurred among males; however, this varied by province or territory.

Although age group distribution varied by province or territory, the highest percentage (28%) of accidental apparent opioid-related deaths occurred among individuals between the ages of 30 and 39 years.

Substances involved

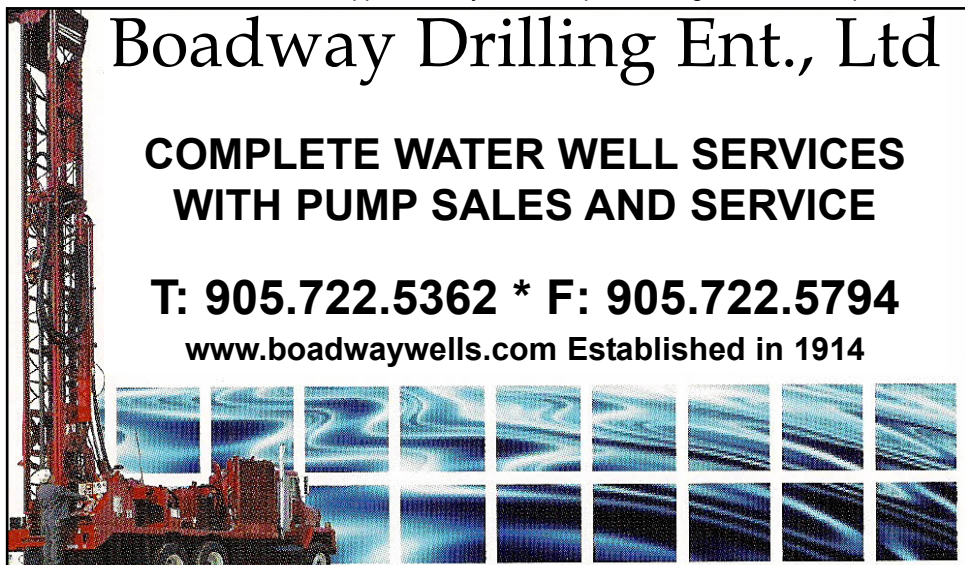
In 2017, 72% of accidental apparent opioid-related deaths involved fentanyl or fentanyl analogues, compared to 55% in 2016.

Approximately 71% of accidental apparent opioid-related deaths reported in 2017 also involved one or more types of non-opioid substances.

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