

The most dreaded effect of an opioid overdose is the significant slowing of breathing, or even the complete stop of respiratory functions. It takes only three to five minutes for oxygen deprivation to the brain to cause permanent brain damage. If this deprivation persists, it can lead to significant cognitive impairment, coma, or death.

Reminder to clinicians

The Department of Public Health invites clinicians and caregivers to watch out for the possibility of overdoses among their patients who use drugs, and encourages them to promote a harm reduction approach to prevent deaths:

1. Share the information about the circulation of methamphetamine (*speed*) on the territory and the risks associated with its use.
2. Provide counseling on safer substance use practices:
 - a. Avoid using alone.
 - b. When many people use, make sure that not everyone uses at the same time so someone can watch over the others.
 - c. Avoid mixing when using, even with alcohol.
 - d. Reduce the amount taken to test the effect of the drug.
 - e. Call 9090 in case of emergency.
 - f. Inform drug users of the *Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act*, which grants immunity to witnesses of overdoses against charges for simple possession of a controlled substance. Also, recommend calling the police or the CLSC for a quick intervention.
 - g. If necessary, direct people displaying a substance use disorder to addiction treatment services.

Action plan

For reference purposes, a copy of the *Plan d'action régional du Nunavik pour la prévention des surdoses aux opioïdes 2019-2022* is available for clinicians at the Inuulitsivik Health Centre and at the Ungava Tulattavik Health Centre. Here are the measures currently in place to react in case of an overdose:

- 200 doses of naloxone are available in each of the 14 villages of Hudson Bay and Ungava Bay,
- Short training videos on opioid overdose for health care professionals can be watched by the staff at both health centers,
- A surveillance and monitoring system for opioid overdoses is currently being implemented in both health centers.

Reporting a situation to the Department of Public Health

The Department of Public Health invites health care professionals to report any suspected or confirmed case of opioid overdose by using the overdose reporting form.

The following situations should be reported:

- The overdose is presumed to be related to opioids,
OR
- A lot of people overdosed in a short period of time,
OR
- The symptoms of the overdose are particularly severe,
OR
- The circumstances are unusual,
OR
- Any other situation of concern related to the circulation of methamphetamine.

The analysis of reports could lead to an epidemiological investigation by the Department of Public Health to assess the risk and to determine and implement the necessary measures to protect the health of the population.

To report a situation:

Send the form by confidential fax at 1 866 867-8026

For information:

During office hours: Olivier Godin at **418 666-7000, ext. 10160**

Outside office hours: On-Call Public Health Doctor at
1 855 964-2244 (toll-free number) or at **1 819 299-2990** (other number in case of issue with the toll-free number)