

Harm reduction during COVID-19



Supporting our wellness during COVID-19

This fact sheet is part of Thunderbird Partnership Foundation's commitment to provide culturally-grounded and strength-based supports for First Nations people during COVID-19. These resources can provide guidance as our communities navigate the current global health crisis, while continuing to face existing health challenges, including substance use and mental health issues.

Forces of colonization have displaced the First Nations' worldview and their ways of living and maintaining mental wellness.

As such, many First Nations Peoples face major challenges that continue to affect their health and wellness. In this context, mental health and substance use issues continue to be some of the more visible and dramatic symptoms of the underlying challenges. (Thunderbird, 2015)

SAFER DRUG USE TIPS

- x **DO NOT** share supplies
 - cigarettes, joints, pipes, injecting equipment, containers for alcohol, utensils
- x **AVOID** close contact and try to stay 2 metres, or 6 feet from your buddy to avoid passing the virus
 - using with a buddy is safer than using alone
- › **DO** wash your hands or use wipes before preparing, handling or using your drugs
- › **DO** prepare the drugs yourself
- › **DO** cough or sneeze into your elbow or use tissue
 - throw away immediately and wash your hands
- › **CLEAN** surfaces with soap and water, alcohol wipes, bleach or hydrogen peroxide before preparing drugs if possible
- › **DO** check in on those who may need extra support
- › **STOCK UP** on harm reduction supplies (new syringes and safe use supplies)
 - get enough gear for 2-4 weeks, to last thru self-isolation, program closures
- › **STOCK UP** on meds
 - ask your doctor for a month's supply of medications if possible
 - ask the pharmacy about their plan for methadone, suboxone, kadian or safe supply
- › **PREPARE** for a drug shortage, or loss of access during COVID-19
 - your dealer might get sick

How to Respond to an Overdose during Coronavirus

British Columbia Centre for Disease Control (2020) recommends the following to respond to an overdose during COVID-19:

1. Try to rouse the person during an overdose by encouraging them to take deep breaths.
2. Call 911.
3. Wear gloves.
4. Give rescue breaths using face shield in naloxone kits (the face shield has a one-way valve and large impermeable area that protects from respiratory secretions).

CALL 9-1-1 and continue to follow the **SAVE ME** steps: **Stimulate, Airways, Ventilation, Evaluate, Medicine, Evaluate**

Possible 911 delays

Emergency services might be slower during a coronavirus outbreak. Try to lower your OD risk. Start low and go slow, stock up on naloxone, and use the naloxone kit plastic face mask if you're giving mouth to mouth.

REFERENCES

- Thunderbird Partnership Foundation. (2015).** *First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum.* National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation. Retrieved from: <https://thunderbirdpf.org/fnmwc-full>
- Harm Reduction Coalition. (2020).** *COVID-19 Guidance for People Who Use Drugs and Harm Reduction Programs.* Retrieved from: <https://harmreduction.org/miscellaneous/covid-19-guidance-for-people-who-use-drugs-and-harm-reduction-programs/>
- British Columbia Centre for Disease Control. (2020).** *BC Overdose Prevention Services Guide.* Retrieved from: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/priority-populations/people-who-use-substances>

For more information visit: thunderbirdpf.org/covid-19