



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Waterloo Wellington

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
Waterloo Wellington

Tips for Safer Substance Use

Avoid sharing supplies. In addition to needles, it is especially important not to share other supplies, like bongs, pipes, and cigarettes. Wipe down supplies with alcohol swabs before using, or change the mouthpiece. Have a designated disposal spot for used supplies.

Keep your space clean. Before and after use, wipe down all surfaces with antimicrobial wipes, alcohol (70%), or bleach. Remember to wipe down the drug packaging itself.

Prepare your drugs yourself. Wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and water and prepare your own drugs. Keep your surfaces clean and wipe them down before and after use with microbial wipes, alcohol (at least 70%), or bleach. If you can't prepare your own drugs, stay with the person who is. Get them to wash their hands thoroughly, and to clean up before and after.

Minimize contact. Avoid groups of people and close personal contact. Keep your distance when purchasing and using. Wash hands before and after all contact. Avoid touching your face. If you have to cough or sneeze, do it into a tissue and dispose of it immediately. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the inside of your elbow rather than your hands.

Know the symptoms. Symptoms of COVID-19 may be similar to cold and flu, and include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, and pneumonia. Symptoms make take up to 14 days to appear after infection, so a person can be infected, and not know it. Don't assume that a person is "safe" because they don't look sick.

Stay clear if you are sick. If you are sick, it is important to self-isolate and avoid all contact with people. Do not visit public places, and stay in your home. If you use needle exchange services, do not visit the location. Call and notify them to make arrangements to have supplies delivered. Use telephone and online support options. Contact your local public health agency for further instructions.

Plan & prepare for overdose. Emergency services might be stretched in a COVID-19 outbreak, and slow to respond to 911 calls. Load up on naloxone and fentanyl testing strips. If you are alone, experiment with using less to lower your risk of OD, and go slowly. If you are using with others, make an OD plan with them and stagger use if possible. Store a breathing mask for use in case rescue breathing is needed.

References:

Government of Canada: www.canada.ca

Harm Reduction Coalition: www.harmreduction.org

Public Health Ontario: www.publichealthontario.ca