

For Immediate Release | August 9, 2018

## Stay safe while enjoying outdoor festivals

Interior Health is advising individuals taking part in festivals and other outdoor parties to take extra precautions to stay healthy and safe this summer.

### Take steps to reduce risk of overdose

British Columbia is facing a public health overdose emergency. The Interior Health region has seen an unprecedented number of overdose deaths due to fentanyl poisoning in the past year. The best way to keep yourself safe is to avoid using drugs. If you choose to use drugs take steps to reduce your overdose risk:

- Don't mix different drugs (including pharmaceutical medications, street drugs, and alcohol).
- Don't take drugs when you are alone. Use in the company of someone who can administer help or call 9-1-1 if you experience an overdose
- Consider getting your drugs checked for the presence of fentanyl. See a [list of locations offering drug checking](#) below.
- Keep an eye out for your friends – stay together and look out for each other.
- If someone is experiencing an overdose or is witnessing an overdose, follow the [SAVE ME](#) steps and call 9-1-1 immediately.
- Use less and pace yourself. Do test runs to check strength – take a small sample of a drug before taking your usual dosage.
- Carry a naloxone kit and know how to use it. Visit [towardtheheart.com](http://towardtheheart.com) for a [list of locations to get a kit](#).
- Recognize the signs of an overdose: slow or no breathing, gurgling or gasping, lips/fingertips turning blue, difficult to awaken, or non-responsive.

### Reduce risk of alcohol related harms

Drinking alcohol is not risk-free. If you are drinking alcohol, stay healthy by following [Canada's low-risk drinking guidelines](#).

The following precautions should be taken to reduce the risk of alcohol related harm:

- Don't drink on an empty stomach. Have a meal or a snack with your drink
- Drink slowly. Don't have more than 2 standard drinks in any 3-hour period.
- Stay hydrated. Have a glass of water or non-alcoholic, caffeine-free beverage (such as a soft drink or fruit juice) between drinks.
- Avoid risky situations and activities while drinking.
- Don't drink and drive. Be sure that you have a safe and sober ride to and from your event.

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### **Stay cool in the heat**

Too much heat can be harmful to your health and can lead to weakness, disorientation and exhaustion. In severe cases, it can also lead to heat stroke, also known as sunstroke. Heat stroke is a life-threatening medical emergency. For more information on signs and symptoms of heat stroke see our [Public Service Announcement on heat related illness](#).

The following precautions should be taken to prevent heat related illness:

- Drink plenty of fluids. Drink extra water even before you feel thirsty.
- Keep cool. Rest breaks are important and should be taken in the shade.
- Avoid sunburn - use sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher.
- Remember, sunscreen will protect against the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays but not from the heat.
- Keep an eye out for your friends by checking others for signs of heat-related illness.

### **Practice safer sex**

Risky behavior like drinking and drug use can interfere with your ability to make decisions to practice safer sex. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) affect both men and women and can affect your overall health and well-being. For more information about STIs, symptoms, and treatment, visit [HealthLink BC](#).

The following safe sex precautions should be taken to protect yourself against STIs:

- Respect others by asking for and getting consent for any physical touch or sexual activity.
- Use protection including condoms and dental dams.
- Make sure your partner(s) have been tested and treated for STIs.
- Avoid sexual contact if you or your partner(s) have symptoms of an STI, have been exposed to an STI, or are being treated for an STI.

*Interior Health is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles and providing a wide range of quality health-care services to more than 740,000 people living across B.C.'s vast interior. For more information, visit [www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca), follow us on Twitter [@Interior\\_Health](https://twitter.com/Interior_Health), or like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/InteriorHealth](https://www.facebook.com/InteriorHealth).*

## Drug checking in the Interior Health region

Drug checking is now offered by a variety of harm reduction service providers across the region. Drug checking is offered by appointment as well as drop-ins at some locations. Call ahead to find out more about services in your community.

### **Cranbrook - ANKORS**

209 16th Ave North

- 250-426-3383

### **Living Positive Resource Centre**

255 Lawrence Avenue

- 778-753-5830

### **Kamloops (North Shore) – ASK Wellness**

433 Tranquille Road

- 778-257-1292

### **Kamloops - Ask Wellness Crossroads**

569 Seymour Street

- 250-851-0899 ext.155

### **Merritt – ASK Wellness**

2196 Quilchena Ave

- 250-315-0098

### **Nelson – ANKORS**

101 Baker St

- 250-505-5506

### **South Okanagan – South Okanagan Women in Need Society (SOWINS)**

SOWINS Mobile Outreach - serves Penticton, OK Falls, Oliver, Osoyoos, Keremeos, Princeton, and Summerland.

- 250-809-7054

### **Vernon – Cammy LaFleur Street Outreach Program**

3306A 32nd Ave (Vernon Downtown Primary Care Clinic)

- 250-545-3572