

## DRUG HARMS UPDATE: WINNIPEG HEALTH REGION 2020

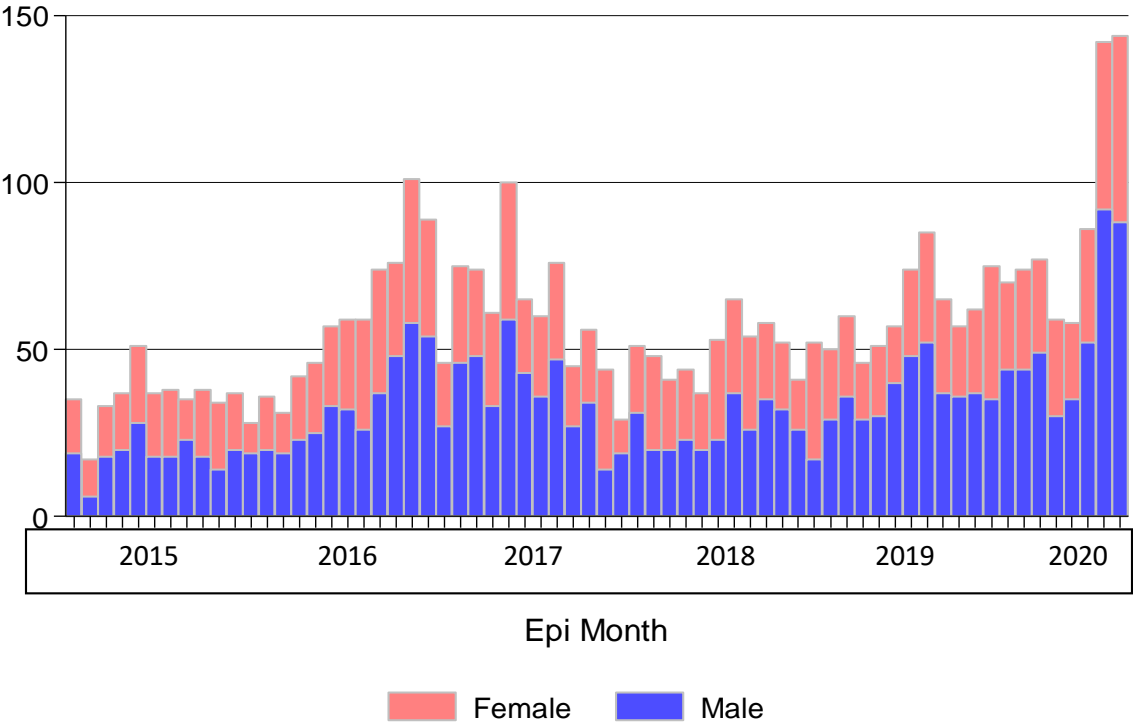
Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, Population and Public Health, is alerting service providers of significant shifts in opioid-related drug harms in the Winnipeg Health Region over the first half of 2020. An increase in opioid-related harms may indicate an increase in opioid use in the population, and/or more toxic drug market products circulating.

### Winnipeg Fire and Paramedic Services (WFPS) Data

There were over 550 cases where WFPS administered naloxone to a person suspected of opioid overdose in Winnipeg between January 1 and June 27 of 2020, so far the highest year on record.

- The highest ever rates of apparent opioid overdose cases receiving naloxone by WFPS occurred in **May and June of 2020** when nearly 150 cases occurred each month
- Males comprised 61% of the cases

**Cases Receiving Naloxone for Suspected Overdose Events, by the Winnipeg Fire and Paramedic Services (WFPS) in the City of Winnipeg up to June 27, 2020**



\*Data provided by WFPS Events up to 27Jun2020

## Community Reported Overdose Events

### Healthy Sexuality and Harm Reduction (HSHR), Population and Public Health, WRHA

**Naloxone Distribution Program Data:** From January 1 to August 6, 2020, the HSHR team in Winnipeg received reports from community members on 169 apparent opioid overdose events where take-home naloxone kits were used.

- In 61% of the events the person who apparently overdosed was male
- 91% of events occurred in private residences
- Approximately 90% of apparent opioid overdose events were reportedly attributed to non-pharmaceutical opioids (fentanyl, heroin, 'down'), descriptions included: blue, purple, grey, red, pink, white, gold/yellow, brown, or many coloured 'down' flakes or chunks, or brown heroin.
- 911 was not called in nearly half (49%) of the events

### If you use drugs:

- Call 911 (or your local emergency response number) if you witness or experience an overdose. The *Good Samaritan Overdose Protection Act* will protect those involved from drug possession charges or breach of probation/pre-trial release charges
- Get naloxone and overdose training before using – bring a friend
- Be aware that benzodiazepines don't respond to naloxone
- Do not use drugs alone or behind a locked door. Have a designated responder: Stagger use with friends so someone can respond/call 911 if needed
- Use a less direct route when you take drugs. Injecting a drug is the most direct and dangerous route.
- If you mix drugs, reduce the amount of each drug you take and use opioids before benzos or alcohol. Use the most unpredictable drug first.
- Use one drug at a time, test your drugs every time by doing a smaller than usual test amount first
- Wait before taking another dose – some drugs take longer to take effect
- The amount of naloxone in a take-home kit may not be enough to reverse very powerful overdoses, such as those caused by fentanyl-like drugs.
- If you inject do not share any injection equipment (needles, cookers, filters, rinse). Sterile drug use supplies and take home naloxone kits are available free from many places, See [www.streetconnections.ca](http://www.streetconnections.ca)