

According to PHO the drug Fentanyl accounted for 85% of the deaths in 2019 followed by Carfentanil and Methadone. There's no hard data available on this yet for 2020 but experts say they have a good idea what is causing the problem.

"Anecdotally, we know of situations in which toxic illicit drugs have been used locally, with very bad results. (For whatever reason, the problem has (seems to have gotten worse)" Catherine MacDonald, Substances and Harm Reduction Co-ordinator, HKPR Health Unit told Kawartha 411 News.

"Overdoses have increased during COVID-19 – and that makes it very (extra) important for people who use substances to be extra careful when doing so and be more discerning of where they get their drug supplies. The risk of COVID-19 also heightens the dangers of substance use

Naloxone is used to temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose but it does not reverse an overdose that involves other drugs and stimulants such as cocaine, crack-cocaine, methamphetamine, as well as pharmaceutical stimulants.

"In some situations, a person's opioid supply has become (could become) contaminated with a stimulant or vice versa. This could happen for a variety of reasons, including deliberate acts or dubious suppliers." MacDonald says. "Regardless of how the drug supply is contaminated, naloxone would not be fully effective if a stimulant is present."

MacDonald is highlighting the importance of not using drugs alone, even in these times of COVID-19.

"People should also be aware of legal protections in place to shield people from prosecution in the event of an overdose. The Good Samaritan Act offers legal protection for anyone who helps out in an emergency, including administering naloxone in an overdose situation. The Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act protects anyone on scene of an overdose from being charged for simple possession or use of drugs." MacDonald Explained

MacDonald Says in order to effectively address the opioid crisis in our community, we need to set aside personal concerns and opinions, and treat people impacted by opioids with compassion and dignity.

"Individuals who use substances and suffer overdoses are *still* people – someone's friend, brother, daughter, parent, aunt, uncle or grandparent. We need to remember this and see value in harm reduction efforts to save lives and reduce the risk of overdoses in City of Kawartha Lakes, Haliburton County and Northumberland County."

She recommends people visit the Health Unit website for [additional steps to reduce their harm when using drugs during the pandemic](#).