



Media Release

Aug. 28, 2023

Community gatherings planned to mark International Overdose Awareness Day

Grey Bruce Public Health will be joining community partners and residents on Thursday, Aug. 31, 2023, in marking International Overdose Awareness Day.

The annual, global awareness event is an opportunity to shine a light on the opioid crisis – including in Grey-Bruce – as well as to remember, without stigma, those who have died from drug overdose/poisoning, and acknowledge the grief of those who have lost loved ones to substance-related harms.

“The undeniable truth is the opioid toxicity crisis spares no corner of our community. Grappling with the complexity and intricacies of this issue necessitates the united effort and collective determination of every facet of our society. The unity of purpose is indeed crucial,” says GBPH Physician Consultant Dr. Rim Zayed.

“International Overdose Awareness Day and associated events in Grey-Bruce are important opportunities to raise awareness of the crisis and spark vital conversations about preventive interventions surrounding substance use, harm reduction, and strategies that can effectively curtail opioid-related deaths. In embracing this day with compassion and understanding, we move closer to the shared goal of safeguarding lives and fostering a future free from the devastating impact of opioid-related harms.”

Several community gatherings are set to take place in Grey-Bruce on Aug. 31, 2023, in recognition of International Overdose Awareness Day. They include:

- A Speakers and Breakfast BBQ from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Owen Sound Farmers’ Market, 88 8th St. E.;
- Candlelit Vigil from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at Coulter Parkette, 583 Green St., Port Elgin;
- A Speakers and Candlelit Vigil from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Heritage Square Gazebo, 358 10th St., Hanover;
- A Vigil & Full Moon Ceremony from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the M’Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre, 1045 3rd Ave. W., Owen Sound.

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Members of GBPH's Harm Reduction Team will be attending International Overdose Awareness Day community gatherings. Naloxone, a life-saving medication that temporarily reverses the effects of an opioid overdose, will be available. Kits are also available via Public Health, participating local pharmacies, and community partners.

GBPH will also be using its social media channels to promote International Overdose Awareness Day messaging and events.

The Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health (COMOH) has identified that the opioid epidemic was already a public health crisis before COVID-19, but the pandemic compounded it significantly. Last summer, COMOH identified [nine provincial priorities](#) for a robust, multi-sectoral response that is necessary to respond to the crisis.

These priorities include enhancing and ensuring the sustainability of support for substance use prevention and mental health promotion initiatives, with a focus on early childhood through adolescence.

Grey Bruce Public Health is the lead agency undertaking a Locally Developed Collaborative Project that seeks to document and examine current evidence-based intervention strategies aimed at preventing substance use and related harms among youth aged 15 to 24, including those implemented by Ontario public health units, and identify indicators for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies.

Among the project's objectives is to determine ways to enhance the effectiveness of substance use prevention efforts and address any existing gaps.

The project is slated to be shared with Ontario public health units in the early fall.

For More Information:

To connect with the Medical Officer of Health or the program manager, please contact:
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Media Release

Sept. 5, 2023

GBPH issues alerts following multiple drug overdoses in Grey-Bruce

Grey Bruce Public Health has issued Opioid Alerts in response to a series of recent drug overdoses/poisonings – the majority of which occurred in Owen Sound.

Over the past four days, Public Health has been notified of one fatal overdose and seven non-fatal overdoses. Six of the eight overdoses took place in Owen Sound.

Fentanyl is the drug suspected in at least two of the overdoses. Toxicology results are still pending.

Opioid Alerts were issued Sunday and again on Tuesday to municipal, emergency service, social service, and community partners.

All unregulated street drugs carry a high risk of toxicity, posing a potential threat to life. These drugs may be unknowingly adulterated or mixed with hazardous substances, such as fentanyl or carfentanil, both of which lack odor and taste. Even a minuscule amount of fentanyl or carfentanil can have lethal consequences.

We urge individuals who engage in the consumption of street drugs to exercise utmost caution and take proactive measures to ensure their awareness of the substances they are consuming. This includes being well-informed about the type, dosage, and origin of the substances.

People who use drugs should **never use alone** and always carry a naloxone kit.

If it's not possible to use with someone else present, call the National Overdose Response Service at **1-888-688-6677**. A NORS operator will stay on the line while the drug is being used. In the event the caller becomes unresponsive, the operator will call 911.

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If you suspect someone is experiencing a drug poisoning, administer naloxone. This may improve breathing, but may not help the individual regain consciousness. It is important to call 911 and continue to monitor breathing until medical help arrives.

Free naloxone kits are available at participating pharmacies in Grey-Bruce, Grey Bruce Public Health, and via GBPH's community partners.

Public Health advises people who use drugs to:

- **Go Slow.** Always start with a low dose and increase slowly, especially if trying something new or restarting use.
- **Take extra caution if mixing substances.** Mixing substances can increase the risk of harm and drug poisonings.
- **Use only new supplies and avoid sharing supplies.** This reduces the risk of getting or passing on an infectious disease. Supplies are available at GBPH and community partners.

Overdose is a medical emergency. Call 911 or go to the Emergency Department. The Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act provides protection from simple possession charges when 911 is called for an overdose.

GBPH urges community partners and the public to report unexpected bad reactions to non-prescribed drugs. Reports can be made over the phone by calling 211 or online using the [211 Report a Bad Drug](#) web form. Reporting drug overdoses/poisonings enables Grey Bruce Public Health to issue timely alerts to its partners and people who use drugs about potential hazards.

For additional Addiction Services:

- ConnexOntario 1-866-531-2600
- Withdrawal Management/RAAM Clinic (Rapid Access Addiction Medicine Clinic) 519-376-3999
- G&B House 519-371-3642 ext.1580
- Ontario Addiction Treatment Centre 519-371-0007
- CMHA Grey Bruce Mental Health and Addiction Services 519-371-3642
- Mental Health Crisis Line Grey Bruce 1-877-470-5200
- If unsure – call 211

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Media Release

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Grey-Bruce residents advised to take precautions during Extreme Heat event

Grey Bruce Public Health is urging residents to take steps to protect against high outdoor temperatures and prevent heat-related illnesses after Environment & Climate Change Canada (ECCC) issued a [Heat Warning](#) for Grey-Bruce.

Daytime temperatures are expected to reach about 30°C in Grey-Bruce on both Tuesday and Wednesday. Humidex values of up to 40 are also anticipated.

A cold front is expected to pass through Grey-Bruce Thursday, bringing an end to the extreme heat.

Heat warnings are issued by ECCC when high temperatures or humidity conditions reach a criteria established by the federal agency and provincial health authorities and are expected to pose an elevated risk of heat-related illnesses.

Anyone is at risk of developing a heat-related illness, which can include heat stroke, heat exhaustion, or heat cramps, during periods of extreme heat. Heat illnesses can develop quickly and can lead to long-term health problems and even death.

People at [higher risk](#) of heat-related illnesses include:

- Older adults;
- Infants and young children;
- People with chronic illnesses, such as those impacting breathing or heart conditions;
- People who are pregnant;
- People experiencing homelessness or who live in substandard housing;
- People with disabilities or who are on certain medications;
- Newcomers to Canada; and
- People who work, exercise, or play sports in the heat.

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To stay safe when it's very hot or humid outside, residents should avoid sun exposure, limit physical activity, and drink plenty of cool liquids. Water is best.

Other ways to [reduce the risk](#) of developing a heat-related illness include:

- Wearing loose-fitting, light-colored clothing made of breathable fabric;
- Engaging in outdoor activities during cooler parts of the day;
- Taking a break from the heat by spending a few hours in a cool place, such as a cooling centre, air-conditioned building, or shaded area;
- Taking cool showers or baths;
- Blocking out the sun while indoors by closing awnings, curtains, or blinds;
- Shading yourself by wearing a wide-brimmed, breathable hat or using an umbrella; and
- Asking your health care provider or pharmacist if the medications you are taking or any health condition you may have increases your health risk in the heat and follow their recommendations.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency. If someone is experiencing heat stroke, call 911 right away and move the person to a cool place, if possible. Symptoms of heat stroke can include a high body temperature, confusion, loss of consciousness, a headache, dizziness, and nausea.

GBPH is asking residents to check on loved ones and vulnerable community members during periods of extreme heat to ensure they're staying cool and hydrated as well.

Public Health has developed an Extreme Weather webpage with additional information on the potential health impacts of extreme heat, how to respond to and protect against heat-related illnesses, and available resources, including public cooling centres. The webpage is available at the following link: [Extreme Weather Link](#).

For More Information:

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Media Release

Sept. 5, 2023

Public assistance request – dog bite – Saugeen Shores

Grey Bruce Public Health is seeking the public's help in identifying the owner of a dog that was involved in a biting incident on Sept. 1, 2023, in Southampton.

At about 8 p.m., a male child was bitten by a small dog, which resembled a miniature poodle, at Gerry's Fast Food, 1 Beach Rd. in Southampton. The dog was less than nine inches tall, brownish-yellow in colour with some white and grey fur. The dog was on a white and brownish-green leash.

The dog was with a couple, who had about six other dogs with them, at the time of the incident.

Grey Bruce Public Health staff needs to confirm the dog is not infectious with rabies. By verifying the health of the dog, the victim can avoid receiving the post-exposure rabies treatment.

Anyone with information related to this incident is asked to call Grey Bruce Public Health at 519-376-9420 ext. 1364.

For more information:

Miranda Young

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Media Release

Sept. 25, 2023

Grey Bruce Public Health leads collaborative project on preventing substance use among youth

Grey Bruce Public Health has led a Locally Driven Collaborative Project (LDCP), aimed at identifying and enhancing evidence-based strategies for preventing substance use and related harms among Ontario youth.

GBPH Physician Consultant Dr. Rim Zayed, the project's Lead Investigator, along with GBPH Program Manager Lami Sadare and Unity Health Toronto staff presented the applied research and evaluation project during a Public Health Ontario (PHO) Rounds event, entitled "[Youth Risk, Protective Factors, and Prevention Against Opioid and Drug Use.](#)" on Sept. 25, 2023.

"This LDCP project comes as data shows opioid-related deaths have skyrocketed in recent years among Ontario youth and substance-related harms among youth are also on the rise. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the issue and impacted Ontario youth particularly hard, with national surveys indicating young people were more likely to report mental health and substance use concerns compared to the general population," says Dr. Zayed.

"It was with this backdrop that the project team set out to identify and understand the strategies currently being used by health units and other stakeholders in Ontario to prevent youth aged 15 to 24 from using substances and experiencing substance-related harms. The project team then used this information to identify ways to improve the overall effectiveness of substance use prevention efforts and address existing gaps."

The goal, Dr. Zayed says, is for the LDCP's findings to help in developing and refining preventive interventions, enable better monitoring/evaluation of prevention strategies, and provide public health units and key stakeholders with the information needed to strengthen their practices and optimize outcomes in substance-use prevention.

Grey Bruce Public Health and the project team received approval and funding from Public Health Ontario in 2022 to undertake the LDCP.

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GBPH served as the lead Public Health Unit for the project, entitled “Implementing an evidence-informed public health approach to health promotion around substance use and preventing substance-related harms among youth aged 15-24 in Ontario.”

The core project team included staff from GBPH, along with the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit and Kingston Frontenac Lennox & Addington Public Health, which were Public Health Units Co-applicants.

Staff from Unity Health Toronto, the University of Toronto’s Dalla Lana School of Public Health, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) and the Ontario Drug Policy Research Network (ODPRN) were also on the core project team.

The COMOHE Drug/Opioid Toxicity Crisis Working Group, York Region Health Unit, Porcupine Health Unit, Public Health Ontario, and the Office of Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health were advisors and supporters to the project.

For the LDCP, the project team documented evidence-based strategies aimed at preventing substance use and related harms among youth aged 15 to 24, created a taxonomy on strategies that address drug use at primordial and primary levels, developed an inventory of evidence-based strategies currently implemented in Ontario’s public health units, and identified indicators for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of identified evidence-based strategies.

The final LDCP report presents recommendations for improving efforts to prevent and delay substance use amongst youth.

They include implementing upstream interventions – initiated early in a person’s life – to address risk factors, such as adverse childhood experiences/trauma, the social determinants of health, low self-esteem, peer pressure, and lack of a positive school environment, as well as protective factors, such as cultural identity, positive peer influence, and strong social supports, to increase resilience and create supportive communities for youth.

Other recommendations include increasing youth engagement while designing and implementing prevention strategies, exploring opportunities for intersectoral collaboration, and leveraging further opportunities to align public health efforts with existing community-based initiatives.

The final report and a project infographic are available to view via the following link: [LDCP Report](#).

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