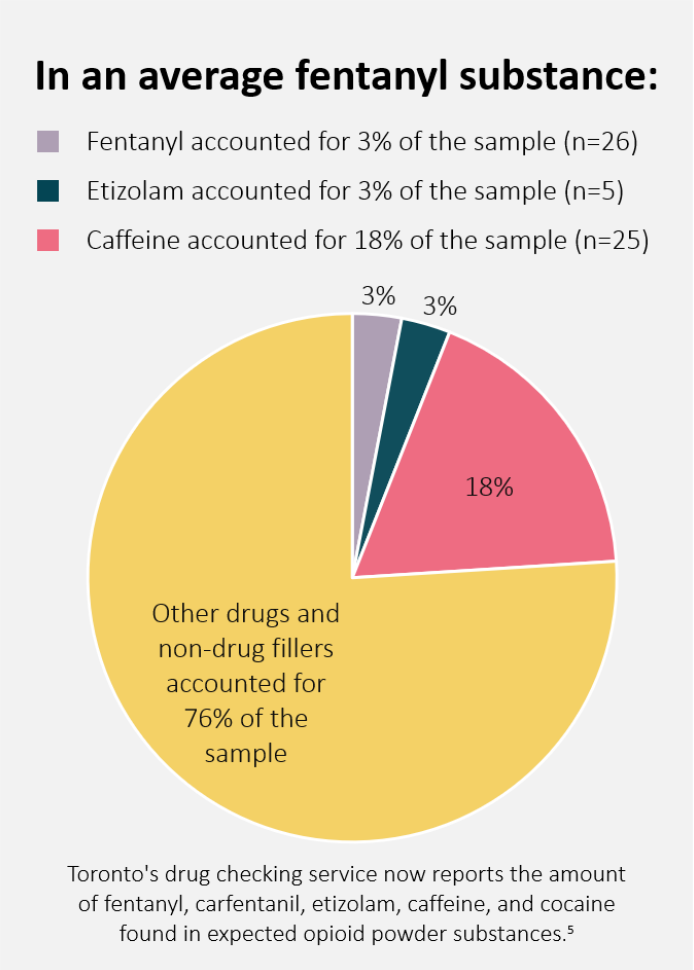
Results from samples checked by Toronto's drug checking service

January 29 – February 11, 2022

Key findings

- 129 samples were checked: 78% were substances[1] and 22% were used paraphernalia[2]
- 71% of the samples checked were expected[3] to be fentanyl, cocaine, or a benzodiazepine
- 7% of the expected[3] fentanyl samples checked were known to be associated with an overdose: nearly all samples contained a benzodiazepine-related drug in combination with fentanyl and/or a nitazene opioid
- 69% of the expected[3] fentanyl samples checked contained at least one benzodiazepine-related drug
- 33% of the expected[3] fentanyl samples checked contained at least one nitazene opioid
- Carfentanil was found for the first time since September 2021, in one expected fentanyl[3] used paraphernalia[2] sample collected in Toronto's downtown core



Toronto's drug checking service now reports the amount of fentanyl, carfentanil, etizolam, caffeine, and cocaine found in expected opioid powder substances.[5]

- Since the beginning of 2022, there has been a significant increase in the number of expected[3] fentanyl samples collected in Toronto's east end, west end, and downtown core that contain xylazine, a tranquilizer approved only for use on animals

Expected fentanyl substances

- 88% (28) of expected[3] fentanyl substances checked[4] **contained fentanyl and other drugs**, including:
  - 89% (25) contained caffeine
  - 54% (15) contained a benzodiazepine-related drug **(!)**:

        - 32% (9) contained flualprazolam **(!)**
        - 25% (7) contained etizolam **(!)**
        - 14% (4) contained bromazolam **(!)**
        - 7% (2) contained flubromazolam **(!)**
        - 4% (1) contained deschloroetizolam **(!)**
    - 46% (13) contained despropionyl fentanyl (4-ANPP) **(!)**
    - 29% (8) contained a nitazene opioid **(!):**
        - 18% (5) contained metonitazene **(!)**
        - 7% (2) contained etonitazepyne **(!)**
        - 7% (2) contained isotonitazene/protonitazene[6] **(!)**
        - 4% (1) contained etodesnitazene **(!)**
    - 21% (6) contained xylazine **(!)**
    - 18% (5) contained acetyl fentanyl **(!)**
    - 4% (1) contained phenacetin **(!)**
    - 4% (1) contained valeryl fentanyl **(!)**

Unexpected noteworthy drugs found in other expected substances

- 13% (9) of the remaining substances checked,[4] meaning substances that weren't expected[3] to be fentanyl, **contained an unexpected noteworthy drug**, including:
    - 18% (4) of **expected cocaine substances** contained phenacetin **(!)**
    - 50% (1) of **expected crack cocaine** substances contained phenacetin **(!)**
    - 100% (1) of **expected heroin substances** contained fentanyl **(!)**
    - One **expected cocaine substance that did not contain cocaine** contained fentanyl **(!)** and flualprazolam (benzodiazepine-related) **(!)**
    - One **expected MDMA substance that did not contain MDMA** contained 5-aminoisotonitazene **(!)** and isotonitazene/protonitazene[6] **(!)**
    - One **expected GHB substance that did not contain GHB** contained etizolam (benzodiazepine-related) **(!)** and furanyl UF-17 (opioid-related) **(!)**

Notes

1 | Substances: Two types of samples are accepted by Toronto's drug checking service: substances and used paraphernalia. Substances could be a small amount of powder, crystals, or rocks, a crushed bit of a pill, blotter, or a small amount of liquid.

2 | Used paraphernalia: Two types of samples are accepted by Toronto's drug checking service: substances and used paraphernalia. Used paraphernalia could be a used cooker or filter, or leftover liquid from a syringe.

3 | Expected (drug): When a sample is submitted to be checked, the drug that sample was bought or got as is recorded. We call it the "expected drug". Knowing the expected drug helps us tailor our harm reduction advice. It also helps us understand contamination to drugs rather than combinations of drugs (e.g., fentanyl was found in a cocaine sample rather than fentanyl and cocaine were found together).

4 | Reason for reporting only substance samples: While Toronto's drug checking service checks both substances and used paraphernalia, we're sharing findings from substances only. Paraphernalia, like cookers, are often re-used. The mass spectrometry technologies used for this drug checking service are so sensitive that very trace amounts of drugs may be found. This means that when paraphernalia is re-used, drugs from past use may present in the results for the sample that is being checked. This can interfere with up-to-date drug supply monitoring, so we've excluded used paraphernalia from this report.

5 | Average amount of drugs found: Toronto's drug checking service can now report the amount of fentanyl, cocaine, carfentanil, etizolam, and caffeine found as a proportion of the total sample submitted for expected opioid, cocaine, crack cocaine and some other powder substance samples. Every other week, we will publicly report the average (median) amount of fentanyl, cocaine, carfentanil, etizolam, and caffeine found in expected fentanyl substances. More information is available on our website.

6 | Isotonitazene/protonitazene: Because isotonitazene and protonitazene have a very similar chemical structure, it is not currently possible for Toronto's drug checking service to differentiate between the two. For this reason, we report the two drugs together.

(!) | Unexpected noteworthy drug: "Noteworthy drugs" are drugs that (i) are linked to overdose or other adverse effects, (ii) are highly potent or related to highly potent drugs, or (iii) may not be desired by some clients. Noteworthy drugs are flagged when they are unexpectedly found in checked samples.

Toronto's drug checking service offers people who use drugs timely and detailed information on the contents of their drugs using the most sophisticated lab-based technologies. Interact with our drug checking data online – it's updated every other week. Sign up to receive reports, alerts, and other information on Toronto's unregulated drug supply.

(e) drugchecking@cdpe.org | (t) @drugpolicyctr | (f) facebook.com/centreondrugpolicyevaluation