

Terms of service

By submitting a sample to be checked by Toronto's drug checking service, you agree to these terms:

- This is a free and anonymous service
- Accepted samples are:
 - Substances, including a small amount of powder, crystals, or rocks, a crushed bit of a pill, blotter, or a small amount of liquid
 - Used equipment, including a used cooker or filter, or leftover liquid from a syringe
- A full microscop (10 mg) of a substance is required for analysis
- Samples are analyzed at a laboratory nearby using mass spectrometry technologies
- Your sample will be destroyed after it is analyzed
- Each sample has a unique ID (e.g., TW100) – you will need that ID to get your results
- Results are available within a couple of days
- Results include the name of each drug found in a sample and some information about how much of each drug is present
- Results are communicated by harm reduction staff in person (preferably), by phone, or by email
- Results are shared with relevant harm reduction strategies
- Your sample may be checked using other technologies to validate their effectiveness or for research purposes, with a goal of making drug checking better and more accessible (this may include emerging technologies developed by for-profit companies)

The following samples will not be analyzed and will be disposed of if they arrive at the laboratory:

- Substances larger than three microscopes (30 mg)
- Substances submitted in a baggie instead of a vial
- Capsules or entire pills
- Organic substances like cannabis, mushrooms, or anything THC-, CBD-, or nicotine-related
- Hormones, steroids, vitamins, or performance enhancing substances

Service limitations

1. Checking your drugs **cannot guarantee that a drug is safe to use**

2. Results for the sample you are having checked **may not represent the rest of the drugs you took this sample from** (this is known as [the Chocolate Chip Cookie Effect](#))
3. Due to technological limitations, some **drugs may be missed**
4. Our drug checking techniques **do not identify or report non-drug fillers**. This could include non-drug fillers that may be dangerous, such as bacteria, metals, pesticides, or inorganic salts. Other non-drug fillers may not be dangerous, such as sugar or laxatives.
5. **Some human interpretation is required** by skilled laboratory technologists, meaning there could be some variation in results
6. **Checking substances instead of used equipment is preferred** because:
 - o Drug equipment, like cookers, are often re-used. The mass spectrometry technologies used for Toronto's drug checking service are so sensitive that very trace amounts of drugs may be found. This means that **when equipment is re-used, drugs from past use may present in the results for the sample that is being checked**. This can interfere with current drug market monitoring, which is why we rely only on substance samples when reporting trends.
 - o Fatty acids are more commonly found in samples that are taken from used equipment, most likely from oils on skin. These **fatty acids can interfere with the mass spectrometry analysis**. It may be difficult to see past them to determine which drugs are present.

Understanding your analysis results

The laboratory-based technologies used by Toronto's drug checking service include [gas chromatography- and liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry](#). These technologies are very sensitive – they can identify hundreds of drugs, even if those drugs are only present in very trace amounts. When it comes to how much of each drug is present, we can report semi-quantified or quantified results.

Semi-quantified results

- Report whether there is more or less of a drug than other drugs in a sample (answer the question: is there more of drug X than drug Y in this sample?)
- Are listed from most to least present
- Are reported for drugs found in samples that are liquid, blotter, used equipment – or for drugs found in powders, crystals, rocks, or crushed bits of pills that could not be quantified

Quantified results

- Report the precise amount of a drug found in a sample (answer the question: how much of the total sample submitted is drug X?)
- Are reported in mg of a standard 10 mg sample and as a % of the total sample submitted
- Are currently only reported for some drugs in samples that are powders, crystals, rocks, or crushed bits of pills
- Semi-quantified results are reported for all other drugs found and listed from most to least present

Questions or comments? You can reach us at drugchecking@cdpe.org
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