

HARM REDUCTION NEWS

-YOUTH EDITION -

Welcome to the Summer edition of Harm Reduction News! Interior Health is proud to have the first health authority-based Youth Harm Reduction program in B.C so we thought we should have a newsletter issue all about Youth Harm Reduction.

We know for some people, youth harm reduction will be new and a bit uncomfortable but we also know that some of you have been using this approach with youth for a long time.

We hope the information in this newsletter meets you where you are at - whether that is starting to dip your toes into youth harm reduction work or jumping in with both feet!

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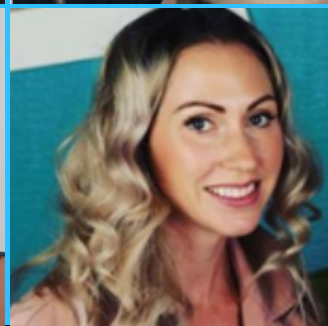
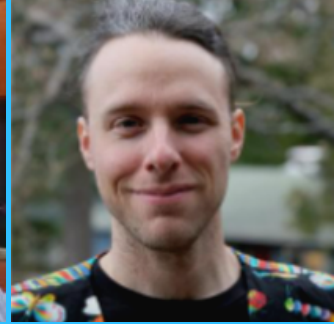
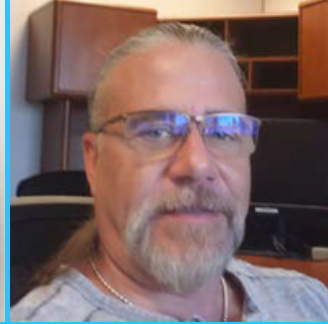
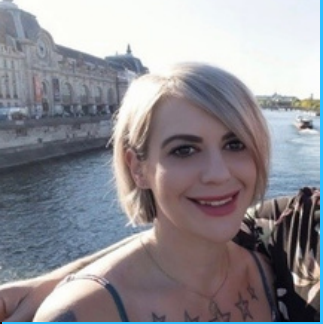
We need to take a moment to acknowledge the collective grief in this region due to the losses experienced this wildfire season.

To those who helped relocate and provide services to evacuees, cared for the health and safety needs of firefighters and other first responders, made sure that people had the information they needed to return home safely, or provided food, comfort and safe places to stay during this difficult time ... you are all heroes.

Much love and respect.



MEET



THE TEAM

welcome

*to the Harm
Reduction
Team...*

The Harm Reduction Program is pleased to announce that Shannon Thomas is joining us in a term position as the Harm Reduction Coordinator covering the North Okanagan, Thompson, Cariboo & Shuswap.

**SHANNON
THOMAS**

Shannon started working with Interior Health in 2011 after obtaining her Masters of Social Work degree from the University of British Columbia Okanagan. After a short stint on the intake team in Mental Health and Substance Use (MHSU), Shannon moved into a counselling role with the team. Shannon has worked both in Kelowna and Vernon supporting people with lived and/or living experience (PWLLE) of substance use.

In 2023, Shannon completed the Addiction Social Work Fellowship with the British Columbia Centre on Substance Use. During this fellowship she had the opportunity to work at various Interior Health sites that service PWLLE providing a unique opportunity to experience different frameworks and lenses in substance use services. Shannon's studies combined with her experience both in MHSU and her Fellowship has contributed to her deep passion and devotion for working in this field.

Outside of work, Shannon can be found in her garden or exploring nature with her family.



WHO IS WHO IN THE ZOO?

THE YOUTH HARM REDUCTION TEAM

- **Name...** Lesley Coates
- **Any nicknames...** Lola - she is my alter-ego, she lives in Mexico and is much more laid-back than I am.
- **Favourite kind of pizza...** I love a good classic pizza - pepperoni, bacon, mushrooms, green peppers, cheese... but Lola prefers a spicy Mexican pizza
- **Three words that best describe your teen years...** Rebellious, Incongruent, Independent
- **Why do you work in youth harm reduction...** A lot of my early career was spent working with youth and I often practiced some aspects of harm reduction "on the down-low" because traditional approaches just didn't work for a lot of youth. It is great to see harm reduction for youth starting to be endorsed as a best practice and its super exciting to have a role in creating much needed youth harm reduction programs and resources.
- **What part of IH do you cover?** I cover the entire IH region.



- **Name...** Heather Lee
- **Any nicknames...** H Bomb - I love to laugh and it's loud!
- **Favourite kind of pizza...** Anything with pineapple, I don't care what the haters say...it is the best topping of all time
- **Three words that best describe your teen years...** Stubborn, Adventurous, Impulsive.
- **Why do you work in youth harm reduction...** As a nurse I spent most of my career in emergency and community programs dealing with avoidable harms associated with substance use. I love how harm reduction provides realistic and evidence based approaches to staying safe. Youth bring energy, ideas and courage to this complex field and it's such an honor to support.
- **What part of IH do you cover?** I cover the Thompson Cariboo Shuswap, East Kootenay as well as Kaslo and Nelson.



WHO IS WHO IN THE ZOO? THE YOUTH HARM REDUCTION TEAM



- **Name...** Adrian Preece
- **Any nicknames...** Ade or Adie (in the UK we often shorten names, it's a sign of familiarity/ friendship, I never get it here and it one of the things I miss the most)
- **Favourite kind of pizza...** Easy answer, ALL... if you are going to force me to choose - whenever I make pizza, I try and recreate the pizza I had in Rome: thin crust, no sauce, just grated zucchini, olive oil, a few herbs and parmesan.... So simple, and it takes me back to that trip every time.
- **Three words that best describe your teen years...** Awkward, Formative, Exploration
- **Why do you work in youth harm reduction...** It's a rare opportunity to help develop resources, disseminate tools, and encourage safe spaces to support people before problems occur. It allows us to engage the entire population- whether they use substances or not. I feel like we get to nurture a future community to have the tools to make informed choices and to take care of and support their friends and loved ones.
- **What parts of IH do you cover?** From Vernon, all the way south through the Okanagan Valley, out to Nakusp/ Castlegar in the east, and Princeton/ Merrit to the West



You can reach us all at
harmreduction.coordinator@interiorhealth.ca

Our work...
See more in our
program brochure



**Naloxone Blue
Kit Program for
Schools**

**Education
programs**

**Policy
Consultation**

Staff Training

INTERNATIONAL OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY

AUGUST 31 2023

A day to support and acknowledge those in our community whose lives have been profoundly altered by overdose. A day to reflect without stigma those we have lost.

A Time To Remember

A friend, child, parent, sibling, partner, colleague, neighbor...overdose does not discriminate

A Time To Act



Youth Unregulated Drug Toxicity Deaths (Overdoses) BC - 2017-2022

142

people under age 19 died of suspected
drug toxicity

#1

cause of death for 10-18 year olds

50%+

of youth drug toxicity deaths occur
when alone

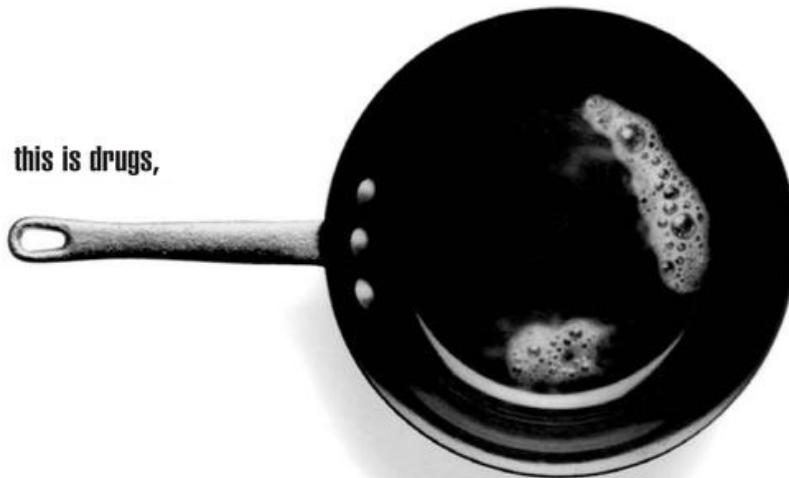
**WE NEED TO TALK TO YOUTH ABOUT HARM
REDUCTION SO THEY CAN TAKE CARE OF
THEMSELVES AND THEIR FRIENDS**

Are we the only ones who think they didn't really want any questions?

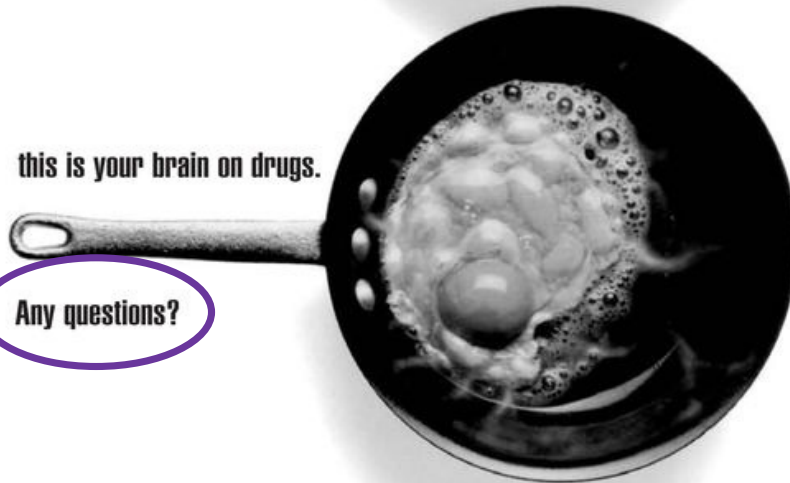
This is your brain,



this is drugs,



this is your brain on drugs.



Any questions?

Partnership For A Drug-Free America





Thank you to the youth at BYTE for sharing these words of wisdom.
Source: Safer Partying Workbook, BYTE: Empowering Youth Society,
Whitehorse, Yukon

We've come a long way since eggs and frying pans...

Tips for Talking with Youth about Substance Use

Be conscious of your tone.

Use a tone and ask questions that encourage honest answers. Try saying things like "I want to understand more about that."

Be comfortable with some silence.

If there is silence in your discussion, do not stress about filling it! Sometimes young people need time to open up, even if you have a close relationship with them already

Manage your expectations.

Do not strike up this conversation with the goal of teaching a lesson or to change minds. Instead, be open-minded about learning about their perspectives.

Be supportive and empower.

You might not necessarily agree with everything they say, but let them know you stand by them and their right to make their own decisions and have their own opinions.

Listen.

Be present and set aside enough time to have a meaningful conversation. Listen to understand and not to respond.



YOUTH VOICES

TREATMENT

YOUTH VOICES ON TREATMENT IN THE SHADOW OF THE OVERDOSE CRISIS

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Centre relationship-building, self-determination, and safety in treatment and care
2. Present pharmacotherapies as one piece of a whole that includes housing, employment, income, social, and cultural supports
3. Avoid approaches that privilege monitoring and surveillance, which can signal danger to youth and lead them to disengage with care
4. Seek permission before sharing information about youth with other providers
5. Focus on the present, not the past
6. Do not reduce youth to their "files"
7. Involve youth as partners in developing plans and timelines for OAT and psychotropic medications, including pathways to tapers
8. Provide youth who want treatment with access to the full range of OAT
9. Recognize that many youth prefer treatment modalities that give them more control and subject them to less surveillance
10. Acknowledge the use of cannabis as a treatment and harm reduction strategy

[CLICK HERE](#)

[Voices on treatment](#)

HARM REDUCTION

HARM REDUCTION CALLS TO ACTION

FROM YOUNG PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS IN THE CONTEXT OF UNSTABLE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

1. We oppose approaches to preventing drug-related harms that are premised on abstinence.
2. Young people's engagement with harm reduction programs and sites should be kept confidential.
3. We demand investment in low-barrier and youth-led harm reduction programs and spaces, including safer consumption sites.
4. Youth-oriented programs and spaces must account for the needs of polysubstance-using youth, BIPOC youth, gender diverse and queer youth, and self-identified young women.
5. Stop pathologizing young people who use drugs (YPWUD) and trying to "save" or "fix" us.
6. The services and systems that YPWUD traverse must be re-designed to foster youth's self-determination in relation to their drug use, harm reduction, care, and families.
7. We add our voices to those demanding the decriminalization of drug use and an end to the war on drugs.
8. We add our voices to those demanding a safe supply of drugs via peer-led compassion clubs.
9. Youth voices should be better integrated into both bottom up, grassroots and top down, state-sponsored harm reduction movements.
10. YPWUD in the context of greater privilege and allies should focus energy on fostering and extending the activism of YPWUD in the context of street involvement.

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[CLICK HERE](#)

[Harm reduction calls to action](#)

DECRIMINALIZATION: WHAT YOUTH NEED TO KNOW

On January 3, 2023 British Columbia decriminalized the possession of small amounts of certain illegal drugs for adults. Since then there has been lots of attention on the subject. It's confusing for many people, including our youth. Talking to youth about decriminalization can help clear up the confusion.

What is decriminalization? Decriminalization is a change in BC's way of dealing with some drugs. Under decriminalization, adults (18 years and older) in B.C. will no longer be arrested or charged for possessing small amounts (2.5 grams) of certain illegal drugs for personal use.

What drugs are covered under decriminalization?

Opioids (such as heroin, morphine, and fentanyl)

Crack and powder cocaine

Methamphetamine (Meth)

MDMA (Ecstasy)

What about people under 18? Decriminalization **does not** apply to people under the age of 18. Youth, 17 years and younger, will continue to face legal consequences for drug possession and other drug related offenses under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, as they always have.

Can adults now possess drugs anywhere? Adults are not allowed to have the drugs mentioned above or any illegal drugs at schools and licensed childcare facilities. If they wish to, workplaces and organizations like community and recreation centres that serve youth can develop policies to prohibit the possession of substances on their premises.

If you have questions about Decriminalization and Youth reach out to the Youth Harm Reduction Team.

Check
this
Out

BCCDC:

Provincial eOPS Protocol

NEW



eOPS

episodic
Overdose
Prevention
Service

eOPS is ...overdose
prevention offered
outside of
established sites

wherever needed

Service set-up
guide & checklist



Equipment
& Resources

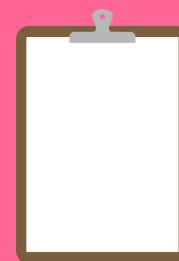
Inhalation eOPS Information

Addressing the greatest
need



Training Links

Procedures &
Documentation



QUICK REFERENCE GUIDES:



Youth



Housing &
Shelters



People who are
Pregnant or Parenting

Key Considerations for Episodic Overdose Prevention Services (eOPS)

YOUTH

Youth face significant barriers to accessing overdose prevention and response services, especially Indigenous youth, those who experience poverty and homelessness, those in and from the child welfare system, and 2SLGBTQ+ youth.

Service providers affect a youth's trust in the healthcare system and their future decisions to seek care.

Support, don't punish

- Provide a welcoming environment for youth
- Support youth to identify their needs and access services

Know regulations about youth access

- Youth can access basic harm reduction services (e.g. eOPS, harm reduction supplies, naloxone, drug checking) on their own
- If a youth wishes to access healthcare services (e.g. safer supply), refer them to a trusted healthcare provider
- Providers can give naloxone and emergency drug poisoning response without guardian consent
- Providers can witness substance use, provide safer substance use education, and support safer substance use practices without a formal capacity assessment or guardian consent

Respect confidentiality

- Youth have a reasonable expectation of confidentiality when accessing services
- Premature or inappropriate reporting could damage trust

Understand your responsibilities

- Providers have a duty to report to child welfare if they believe a child under 19 is being abused or neglected
- Substance use alone or accessing harm reduction are NOT reasons to report
- Duty to report should be done thoughtfully and together with the youth and with any support people identified by the youth

Let's Talk About SEX!

Why?

Healthy relationships, and learning about your body, health condition, and sexuality is all part of growing up. Youth need reliable, accessible and non-judgmental information.

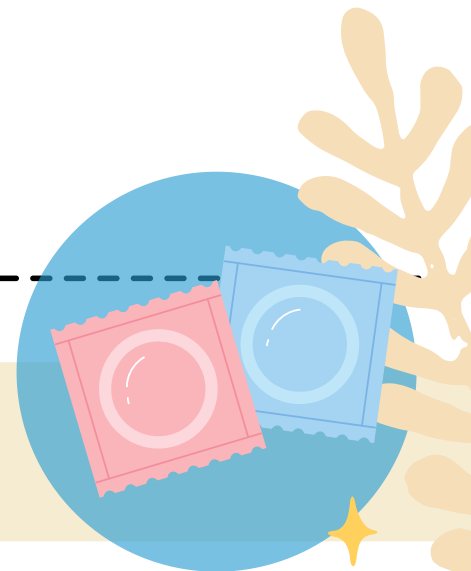
Where?

There are lots of great websites to check out for professional practice guidelines and youth specific resources:

- [Smart Sex Resource](#)
- [Options for Sexual Health](#)
- [Teen Health Source](#)
- [QMunity](#)
- [Amaze](#)
- [Foundry](#)

IH Sexual Health

Youth Toolkit



How?

Ensure your condom distribution program is youth friendly!

- Check out the best practice guidelines and poster on the next two pages!

Is your condom distribution program barrier-free*?

*Yeah, we meant to say that :)

Let's face it, going to get condoms when you are a teen is scary stuff. Research shows the easier it is for teens to get condoms, the more likely they will use them. Always aim for condom distribution programs that have high accessibility and high anonymity.

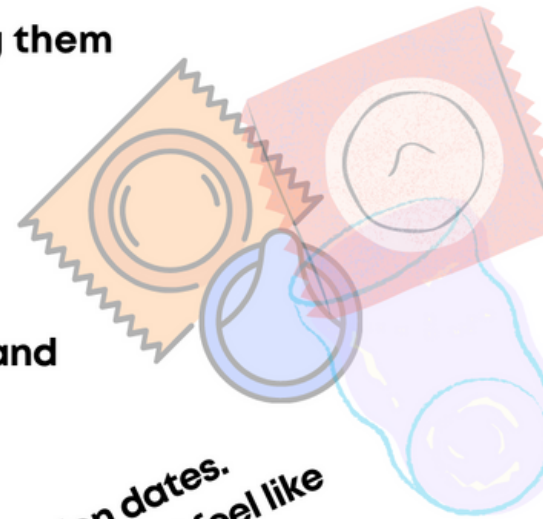
High accessibility

- FREE! FREE! FREE!
- Multiple locations - health clinic, counselling office, bowls in washrooms/change rooms and hangout spaces.
- Private locations - no one wants to ask for condoms in a busy office full of people.
- No limit on quantity - sometimes teens are getting them for others or feel awkward coming back for more.



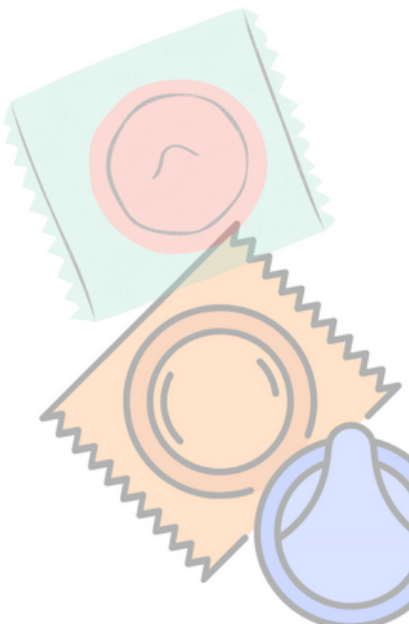
High anonymity

- Grab and go! Put them out in bowls.
- No requirement to meet with a counsellor or nurse or other staff - but make literature on how to use them and other sexual health topics easily available.
- No paper work to complete.
- No need to give your name.
- No need for parent/guardian consent.

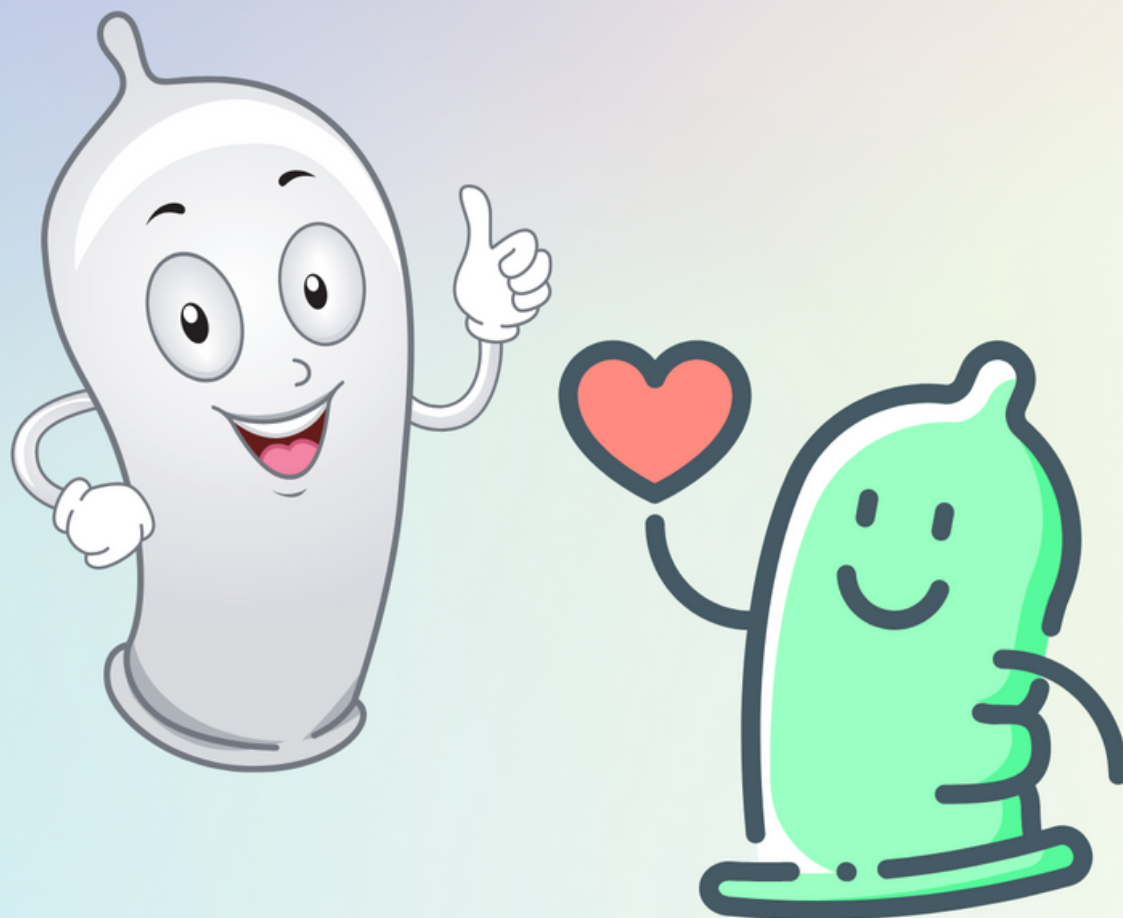


Other Tips!

- Don't forget to check expiration dates.
- Ensure packaging is intact - should feel like a pillow if gently squeezed.
- Avoid storing condoms in direct sunlight or extreme temperatures.
- Provide both internal and external condoms.
- Don't forget to provide lube!
- Talk about sex! Provide evidence-based sexual health education, promote safer sex practices, advertise where to get condoms.



Need some condoms?



Free condoms available at:





CONSENT CAFE



We love hearing about great work like this!

Consent Café is an activity-based consent and sexualized violence prevention program designed specifically for children, youth, and young adults. The initiative focuses on healthy relationships, healthy sexual decision making, reliable sources of health information, and youth-specific strategies to protect themselves and others from potential exploitation, abuse, and harm.

This year SD73 partnered with Thompson Rivers University to run the program for approximately 133 students at various schools to gain self-awareness and skills to identify and participate in healthy relationships, positive communication, and understand the difference between consent and coercion.

Here's what students and educators had to say:

"I feel like if we were all taught at a young age what consent is, some situations could be prevented. I already had a general knowledge of consent but I learned more about physical, sexual, and online consent at the Café."

"The program works because we meet the participants where they're at, where they're learning, where they're building relationships, of knowledge acquisition, and where they're learning to navigate consent every day,"

Want to learn more? Check out <https://www.tru.ca/current/wellness/wellness/consent-cafe.html>



YOUTH HARM REDUCTION TOOLKIT



**EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO GET
THE JOB DONE**



**CLICK
HERE**





FINDING HARM REDUCTION INFO ON THE INTERIOR HEALTH WEBSITE

HARM REDUCTION INFORMATION FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

This is where you can find all the info that our external partner agencies need about naloxone, harm reduction supplies, overdose prevention and drug checking guides, peer engagement tools, courses like Harm Reduction 101 and the fentanyl test strip online course and more.

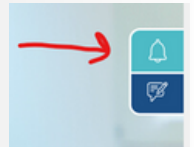
How to get there from the home page? Click the "Information For" button at the top and select community partners and look for the harm reduction button.

HARM REDUCTION

This page is where you will find high level information for the general public on harm reduction as it applies to substance use - what is harm reduction and why is it important; a brief description of the key harm reduction services and all the sharps information is here too. To get here from the home page click the Health Wellness button then pick Substance Use and Addiction, and find the Harm Reduction button.

DRUG AND OVERDOSE ALERTS

The most current drug and overdose alerts are here. To see all the alerts in the region click on the little bell on the home screen then choose from COVID-19, Environmental or Toxic Drugs.



SEXUAL HEALTH

Here you can find information on STIs, HIV, HCV, gender identity and sexual health resources, Aboriginal sexual health resources and more. To get here from the home page click the Health and Wellness button then pick Sexual Health.

OVERDOSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

This page is for the general public. There is information here on how to identify and respond to an overdose, overdose response services, overdose and substance use related news and surveillance (Coroners reports and BCCDC dashboards). To get here from the home page click the Health & Wellness button then pick Substance Use and Addiction and click on the Overdose button.

