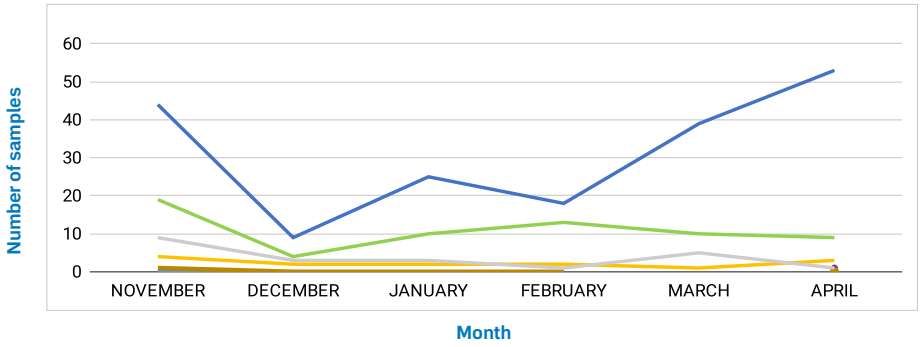
April 2023

Drug Checking in Northern Health

Key Findings

- In April, a total of 67 drug checks were performed by two services offering FTIR drug checking in the Northern Health region
- The percentage of opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines increased from 41.0% to 47.2% in April (25 of 53 samples). Trends may be hard to infer due to the small number of samples over a large region.
- Northern Health issued one drug alert concerning a down sample that contained high concentrations of fentanyl and xylazine with benzodiazepines present.
- Drug checking services with FTIR and test strips are now available in the Northern Health Region. Services are available at POUNDS in Prince George and the Northwest Intensive Case Management Team (ICMT) location in Terrace. For updated times and locations, please visit the Northern Health website.

Number of drug samples checked in the past 6 months



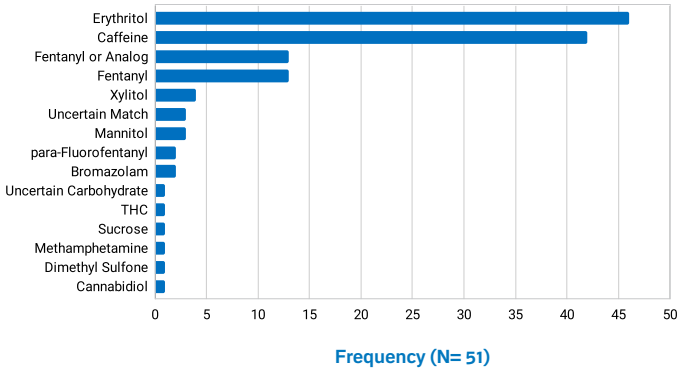
Number of samples by drug category in April

Opioid	53
Stimulant	9
Depressant	1
Psychedelic	3
Other	0
Polysubstance	0
Unknown	1

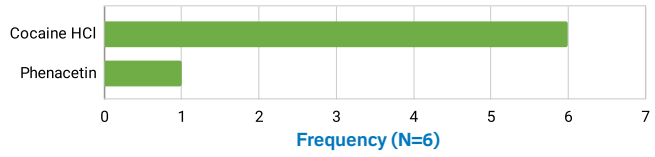
TOTAL: 67

Components found in drug samples in April

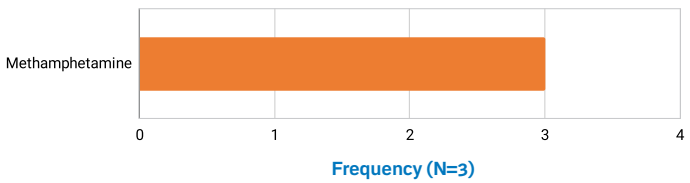
Components in opioids



Components in cocaine



Components in methamphetamine



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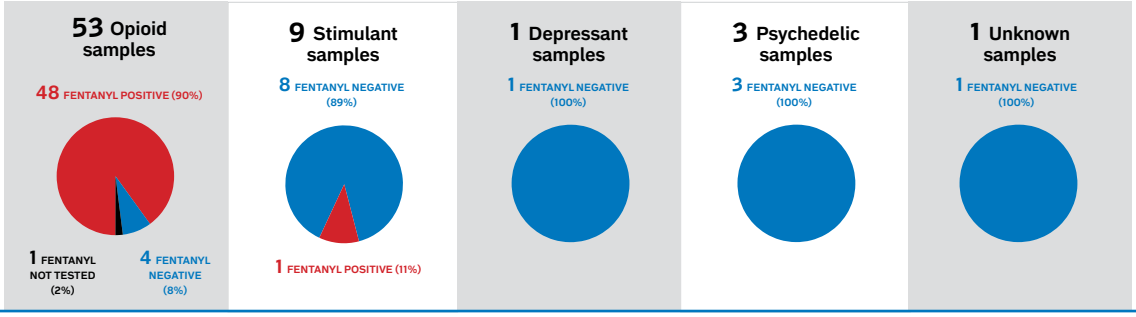
Number of samples tested with fentanyl present



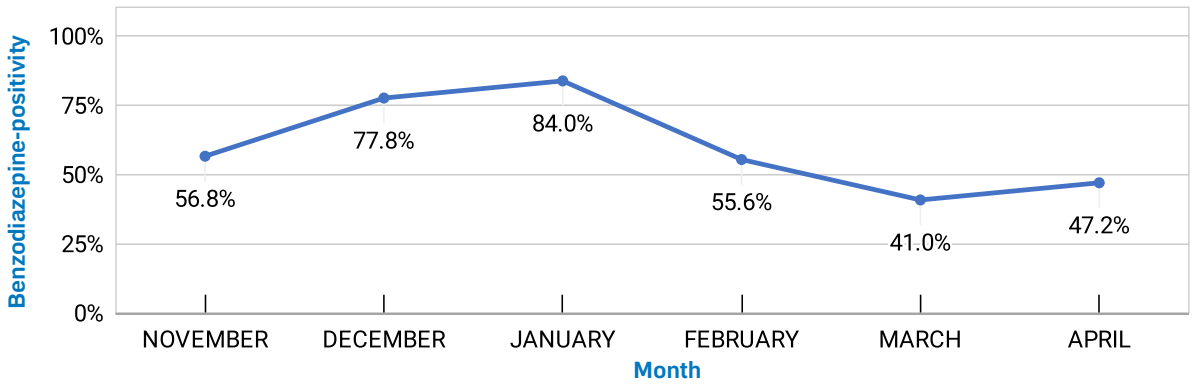
PUBLIC HEALTH NOTIFICATIONS

Date & Location	Expected Drug	Drugs Detected	Fentanyl Strip	Benzo Strip	Area Purchased	Alert Message
April 21, 2023 Prince George	Down	Erythritol, Caffeine, Fentanyl or Analogue, Bromazolam	Positive	Positive	Prince George	Increased OD events for Prince George, some linked to red down with high levels of fentanyl and bromazolam (benzodiazepine).
Health authorities and community organizations issue further toxic drug alerts from sources other than drug checking. See their respective websites or social media accounts for more alerts.						

Number of drugs checks at each site

Location	# of drug checks
Northwest ICMT (Terrace)	8
POUNDS (Prince George)	59
TOTAL	67

Percentage of opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines in the past 4 months



During the month of April, **47.2%** of expected opioid samples tested positive for benzodiazepines using test strips in our partner site in Northern Health **(25 samples of 53 checked)**. Opioid samples are checked for benzodiazepine-positivity using BTNX test strips and the FTIR spectrometer. The results presented here are derived from both of these technologies and are presumptive until confirmed by a laboratory.

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Drug Checking in Northern Health

of samples that matched client expectation

using FTIR/test strip drug checking

EXPECTED DRUG	Matched	Did Not Match	Match Not Determined	Samples Tested
Opioid	48	2	3	53
Stimulant	9			9
Depressant	1			1
Psychedelic	3			3
Unknown				1
Total	61	2	3	67

Number of opioid samples that matched client expectation

using FTIR/test strip drug checking

EXPECTED DRUG	Matched	Did Not Match	Match Not Determined	Samples Tested
Fentanyl		1		1
Down	48	1	1	50
Pharmaceutical			2	2
Total	48	2	3	53

Please note that the presence of the expected substance does not imply purity, as samples frequently contain adulterating cutting agents

Depressant include: *benzodiazepines, etizolam, GHB, hypnotics*

Opioid include: *"down," heroin, fentanyl, pharmaceutical opioids*

Polysubstance includes: *cross-category mixtures*

Psychedelic include: *MDMA and related, 2C-family, tryptamines, ketamine, LSD*

Stimulant include: *methamphetamine, "speed," cocaine and crack cocaine, cathinones*

Unknown includes: *Samples where the individual was unable to identify an expected substance. This includes found samples.*

Data represented here are collected from our partner sites across the province. Drug samples are tested using the Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) spectrometer in combination with fentanyl test strips and benzodiazapine test strips.

There is 5% fentanyl detection limit on the FTIR spectrometer (McCrae, 2019), and a drug check on any given sample consists of both the FTIR and BTNX fentanyl immunoassay test strip testing done in combination. When applicable, BTNX benzodiazepine immunoassay test strips are also used.

BCCSU gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following partners:

BRITISH COLUMBIA CENTRE ON SUBSTANCE USE
Networking researchers, educators & care providers

northern health
the northern way of caring

THE POUNDS PROJECT