# Drug Checking in Island Health

April 2025

🔍 Key Findings

- In April, a total of 113 drug checks were performed by the CMHA Mid–Island Albert Street site in Nanaimo.
- The percentage of all opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines by FTIR and/or test strip increased from the previous month to 71.9% (46 of 64 samples).
- Benzodiazepines were detected by FTIR in 8.1% of unregulated opioids (5 of 62), indicating their presence in higher concentrations. Of these, desalkylgidazepam was most frequently identified.
- Fentanyl was the most common opioid detected by FTIR (46.8%; 29 of 62), followed by fluorofentanyl (29.0%; 18 samples).
- Substance (The Vancouver Island Drug Checking Project), offers drug checking in Victoria and communities across the Island. For more information, please visit www.substance.uvic.ca.
- To find drug checking services near you, please see our site locator.

Number of drug samples checked in the past 6 months
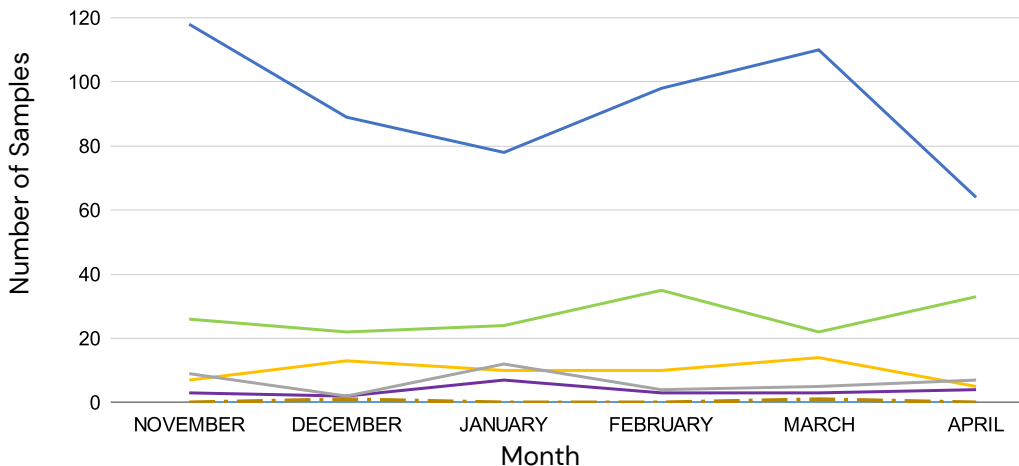
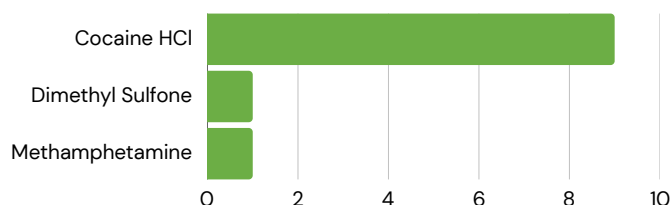
Number of samples by drug category in Apr.

🔵 Opioid		64
🟢 Stimulant		33
🟣 Depressant		4
🟡 Psychedelic		5
🔵 Other		0
🟤 Polysubstance		0
⚪ Unknown		7
Total:		**113**

Number of drug checks at each site

Location	# of Drugs Checked
Albert St. OPS (CMHA Nanaimo)	113
Total:	**113**

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Components found in drug samples in April

Components in cocaine

Component	Frequency
Cocaine HCl	~9
Dimethyl Sulfone	~1
Methamphetamine	~1

Frequency (N=9)

Components in unregulated opioids

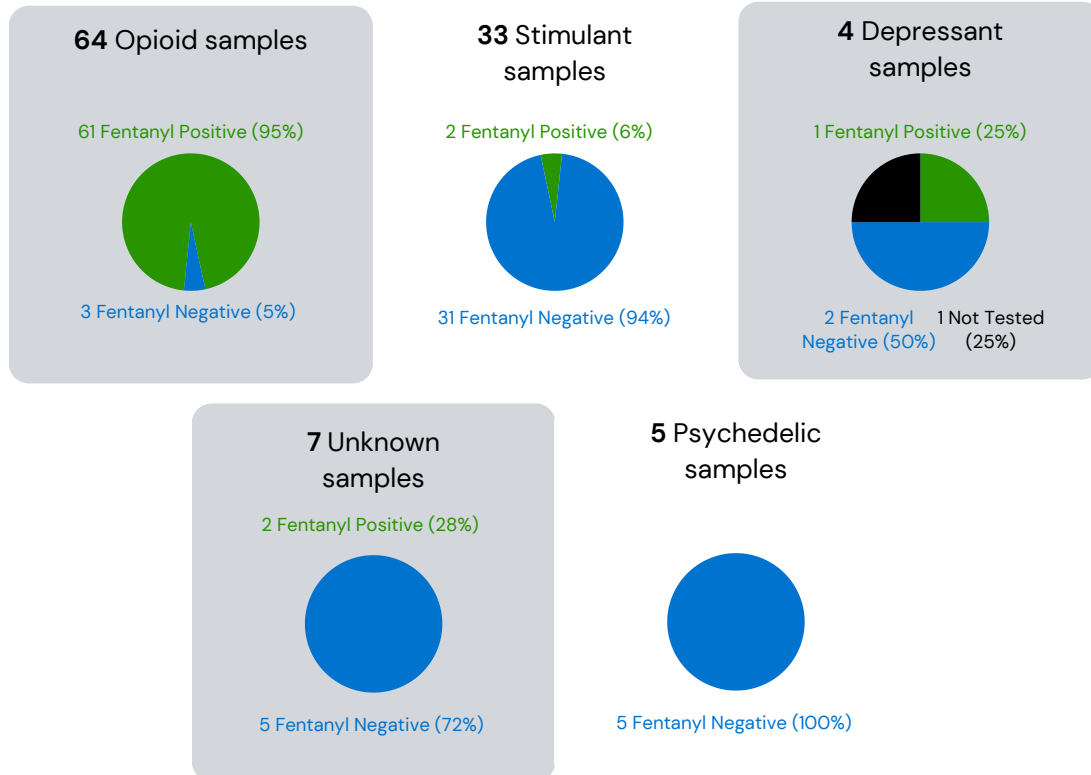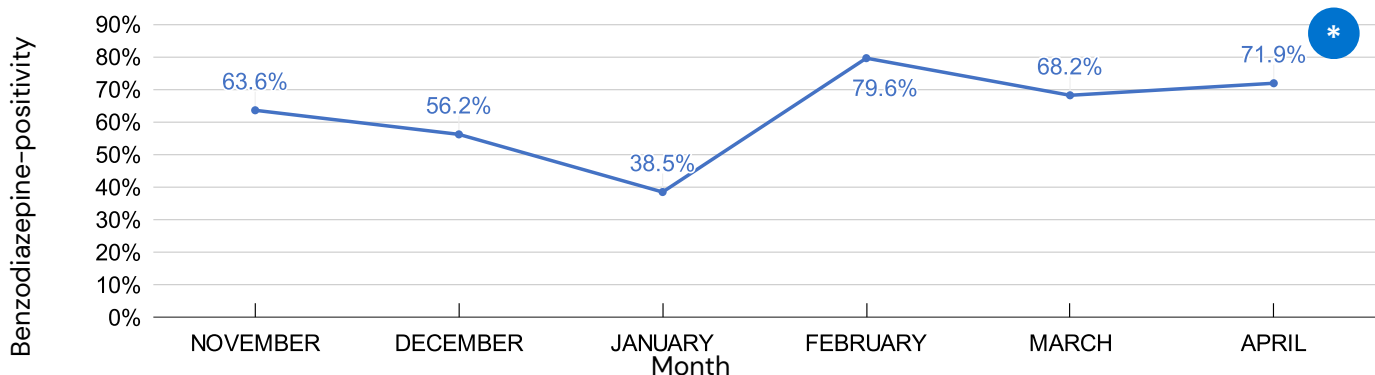| Component	Frequency
Caffeine	~58
Erythritol	~36
Fentanyl	~29
Fluorofentanyl	~18
Dimethyl Sulfone	~7
Uncertain Fentanyl Analog	~7
Desalkylgidazepam	~4
Xylitol	~3
Mannitol	~2
Phenacetin	~2
Sodium Bicarbonate	~2
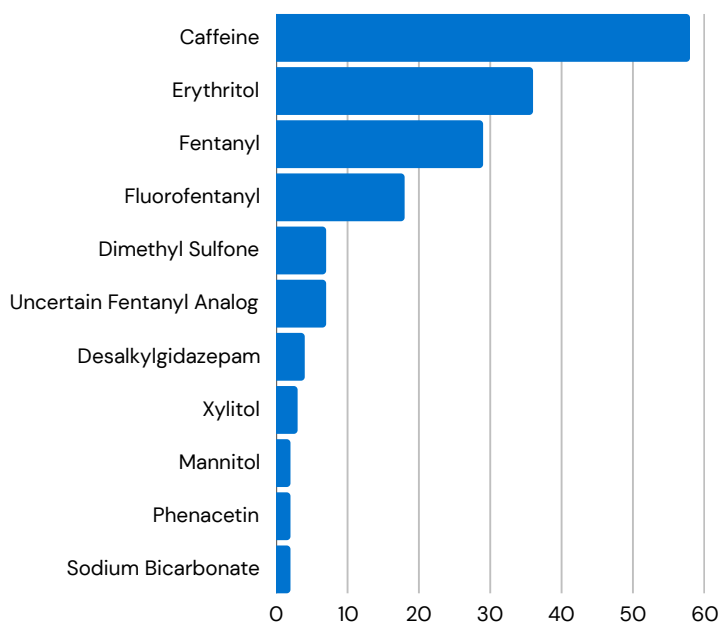
There were additional compounds detected a single time each:
Bromazolam, Fentanyl Base, Methamphetamine, Uncertain Match.

Frequency (N=62)

Number of samples tested with fentanyl present

64 Opioid samples

61 Fentanyl Positive (95%)

3 Fentanyl Negative (5%)

33 Stimulant samples

2 Fentanyl Positive (6%)

31 Fentanyl Negative (94%)

4 Depressant samples

1 Fentanyl Positive (25%)

2 Fentanyl Negative (50%)

1 Not Tested (25%)

7 Unknown samples

2 Fentanyl Positive (28%)

5 Fentanyl Negative (72%)

5 Psychedelic samples

5 Fentanyl Negative (100%)

Percentage of opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines in the past 6 months

Benzodiazepine-positivity

- NOVEMBER: 63.6%
- DECEMBER: 56.2%
- JANUARY: 38.5%
- FEBRUARY: 79.6%
- MARCH: 68.2%
- APRIL: 71.9% *

Month

*During the month of April, **71.9%** of expected opioid samples tested positive for benzodiazepines using test strips in our partner site in Island Health (**46 samples of 64 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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Number of samples with expected drug present

Expected Drug		Present	Not Present	N/A	Total
Opioid		59	4	1	64
Stimulant		29	4	0	33
Unknown		0	0	7	7
Psychedelic		5	0	0	5
Depressant		1	2	1	4
TOTAL		94	10	9	113

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

Number of opioid samples with expected drug present

Expected Drug		Present	Not Present	N/A	Total
Down		50	1	0	51
Fentanyl		8	0	0	8
Heroin		0	3	0	3
Pharmaceutical		1	0	1	2
TOTAL		59	4	1	64

Please note that the presence of the expected substance does not imply purity, as samples frequently contain adulterating cutting agents.
'Down' can refer to any opioid drug present in any amount.

Depressant includes: benzodiazepines, etizolam, GHB, hypnotics

Opioid includes: "down", heroin, fentanyl (unregulated opioids), and pharmaceutical opioids

Polysubstance includes: cross-category mixtures

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

Stimulant includes: methamphetamine, "speed," cocaine and crack cocaine, cathinones

Unknown includes: samples where the individual was unable to identify an expected substance – this includes found samples.

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Public Health Notifications

Date & Location	Expected Drug	Spectrometry Results	Fentanyl Strip	Benzo Strip	Alert Message
					No alerts for Island Health this month.

To subscribe to the provincial drug alert and response system, text the word JOIN to 253787 (ALERTS).

Data represented in this report is collected from our partner sites across the province utilizing Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) spectrometry in combination with BTNX fentanyl test strips, as well as benzodiazepine test strips when applicable. We note the FTIR spectrometer has a detection limit of approximately 5% concentration (McCrae, 2019).

BCCSU gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following partners:

island health

Canadian Mental Health Association
Mid-Island

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