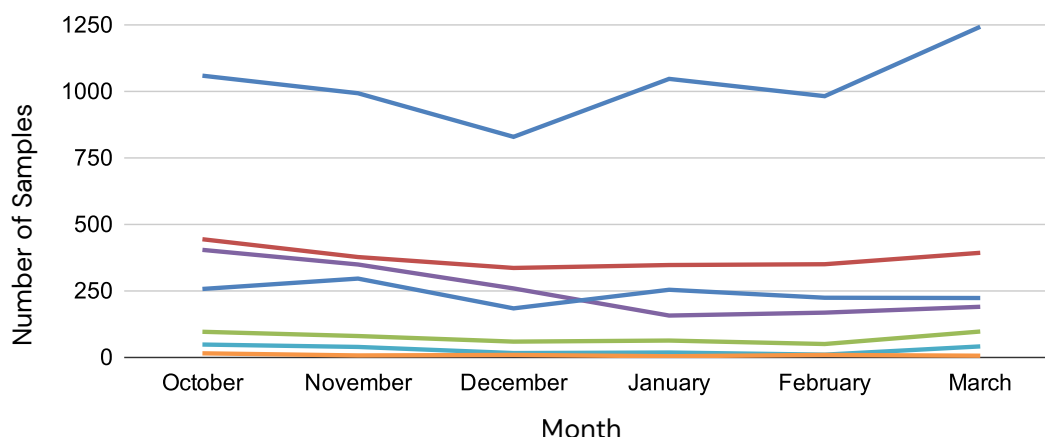




### Key findings

- In March, **2,186** drug checks were performed by community drug checking sites in BC (**60 access points**). The increase in samples from previous months is largely due to the expansion of services in the Interior Health region.
- The percentage of all opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines by FTIR and/or test strip increased to **45.7%**. Desalkylgidazepam remained most frequently identified by FTIR, though detection has declined to levels last seen in 2024.
- We continue to monitor the emergence of novel benzodiazepines in unregulated opioids, which included meclonazepam, ethylbromazolam, ethylflualprazolam, and clobromazolam in March.
- The median concentration of fentanyl and/or fluorofentanyl in unregulated opioids decreased to **8.7%** in March (see page 3).
- Among opioid samples tested with medetomidine test strips and FTIR in March, **33.2%** were positive for medetomidine. With the increase in medetomidine in the unregulated drug supply, all health authorities have implemented medetomidine test strips at drug checking sites.
- In opioids sent for **secondary testing** across BC in March (**n=325**), medetomidine was detected in **123 samples**. Medetomidine concentrations ranged from **<1% to 16%**, and the median was **1.7%**. In addition, xylazine was detected in **24 samples**, and carfentanil in this month.

### Number of drug samples checked in the past 6 months



### Number of samples by drug category in Mar.

Opioid	1242
Stimulant	392
Depressant	96
Psychedelic	189
Other	40
Polysubstance	5
Unknown	222

**Total: 2,186**

### Number of samples tested by region

Vancouver Coastal Health region: 868 (**40%**)

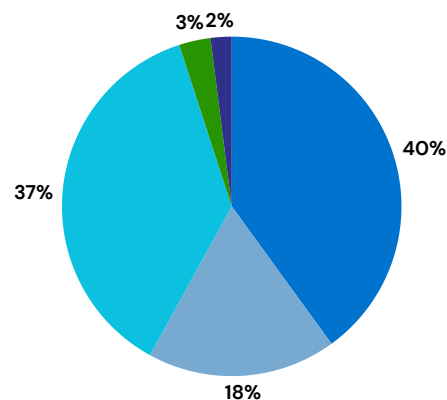
Fraser Health region: 390 (**18%**)

Interior Health region: 804 (**37%**)

Island Health region: 68 (**3%**)

Northern Health region: 56 (**2%**)

**Total: 2,186\***



\*Does not include samples tested at Substance Drug Checking services. Please see the Island Health report for more information.

### Number of samples with the expected drug detected

Expected Drug	Detected	Not Detected	N/A	Total
Opioid	1189	41	12	1242
Stimulant	377	15	0	392
Depressant	48	47	1	96
Psychedelic	172	12	5	189
Other	25	6	9	40
Polysubstance	5	0	0	5
Unknown	0	0	222	222
<b>Total</b>	<b>1816</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>2186</b>

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

## Opioids

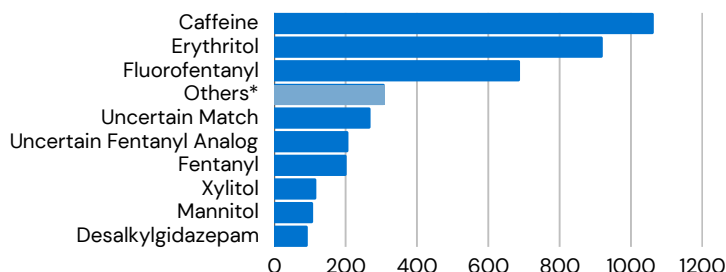
### Number of opioid samples with the expected drug detected

Expected Drug	Detected	Not Detected	N/A	Total
Fentanyl	49	2	0	51
Heroin	10	4	0	14
Other Opioid	3	0	1	4
Down	1099	18	0	1117
Pharmaceutical	25	16	11	52
Opium	3	1	0	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>1189</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1242</b>

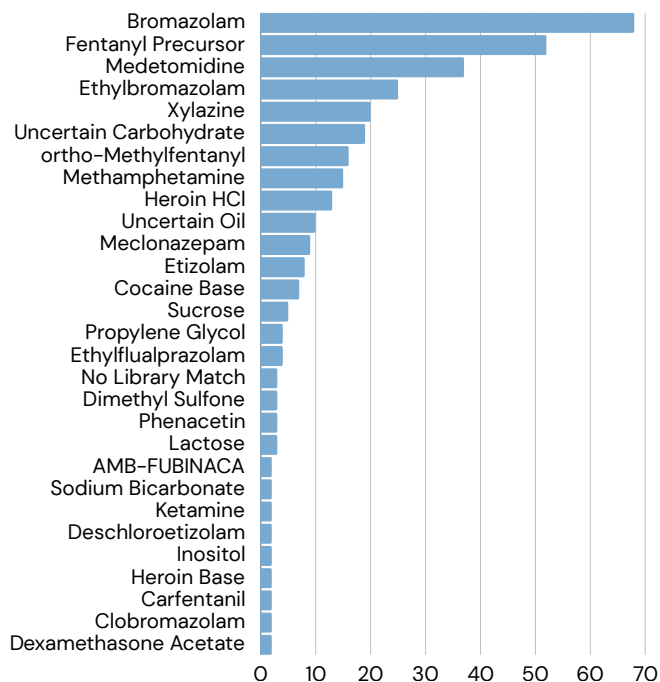
Please note that the presence of the expected substance does not imply purity, as samples frequently contain adulterating cutting agents. 'Down' can refer to any opioid drug present in any amount.

### Components detected in unregulated opioids (N=1182)

#### Main components



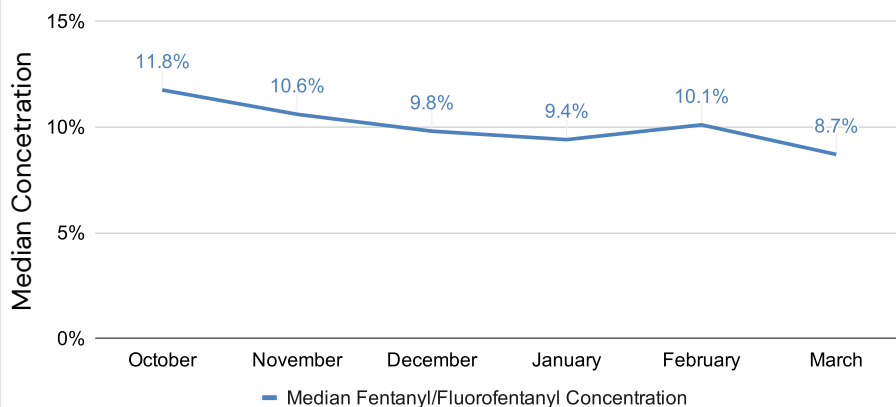
#### Other components



Additional components detected a single time have been omitted from these charts. All sample data can be found on the [BCCSU Drug Sense dashboard](#).

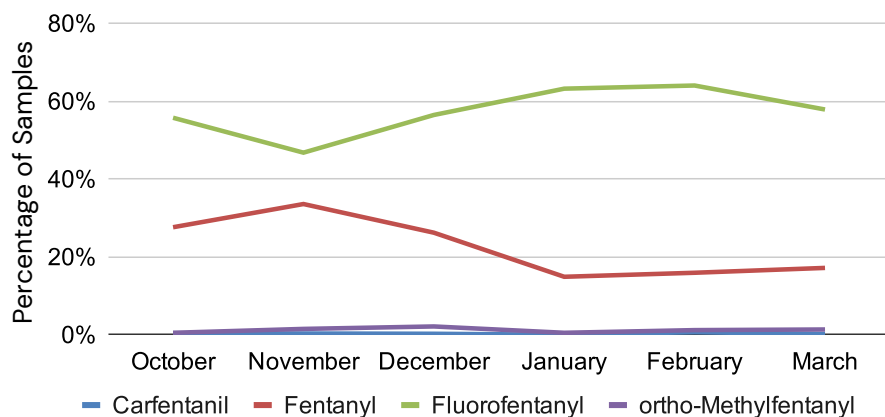
### Median fentanyl concentration of unregulated opioids, past 6 months

Concentrations were estimated using a validated quantification model for the purposes of this report with aggregated data. To learn more about the QUANT3 quantification model visit [here](#).



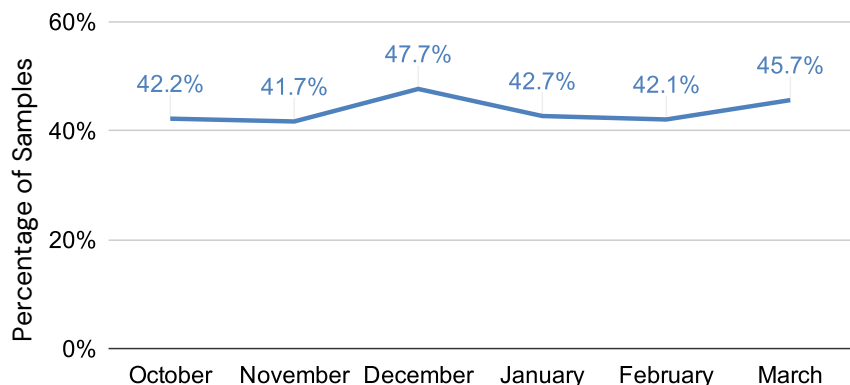
- March continued the overall downward trend in fentanyl/fluorofentanyl concentrations observed since September. The median concentration decreased to **8.7%** ( n=1116 ), the lowest level recorded since March of last year.
- Most unregulated opioids contained fentanyl and/or fluorofentanyl at concentrations between **4.3%** and **14.5%** in March, but concentrations can range from trace amounts to comprising most of the mixture.
- Fentanyl and fluorofentanyl are the most common fentanyl analogs detected in unregulated opioids, and are considered to have similar potency. They are combined here to show their overall median concentration.

### Fentanyl analogs detected in unregulated opioids, past 6 months



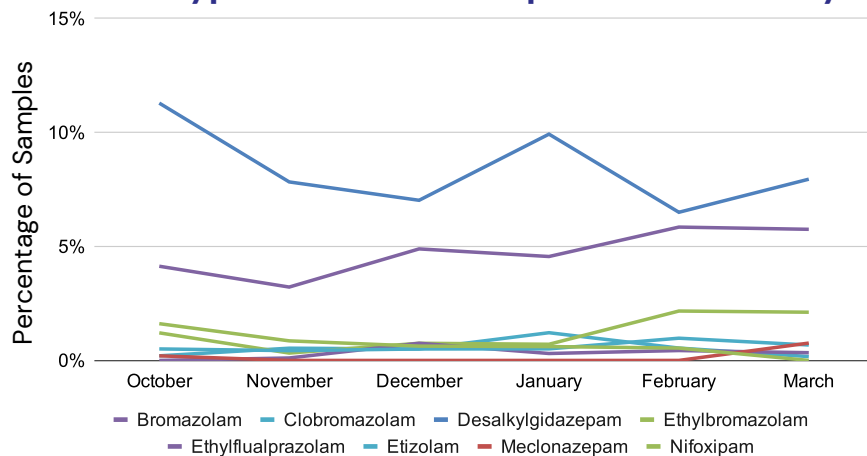
- In March, fluorofentanyl was detected in **57.9%** of samples (**689 of 1182 checked**), the highest level of detection to-date. Fluorofentanyl continues to be the most common fentanyl analog detected by FTIR in unregulated opioids.
- Conversely, fentanyl was detected in **17.2%** of opioids (**203 samples**). The declining number of detections may indicate less fentanyl is circulating, and/or that it is present in concentrations below the FTIR detection limit (<5%).
- Carfentanil was detected by FTIR in **2 samples** this month. The true number is expected to be higher than what is observed by FTIR. Please see the **Secondary Testing section** for more information on carfentanil detection.

### Percentage of opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines, past 6 months



- During the month of March, **45.7%** of all expected opioid samples tested positive for benzodiazepines (**567 samples of 1242 checked**).
- Opioid samples are checked for benzodiazepine-positivity using BTNX test strips and the FTIR spectrometer. The true prevalence may be higher, as some benzodiazepines (e.g., etizolam, ethylflualprazolam) may be missed by test strip.

### Types of benzodiazepines detected by FTIR, past 6 months



- In March, **17.3%** of unregulated opioids (**205 of 1182 samples**) contained benzodiazepines in concentrations detectable by FTIR (>5%).
- Desalkylgidazepam remained the most common (**8.0% ; 94 samples**), followed by bromazolam (**5.8% ; 68 samples**).
- Meclonazepam, a novel benzodiazepine, was detected by FTIR for the first time this month, found in **6 samples**.
- Other novel benzos detected this March include ethylbromazolam (**25 samples**), ethylflualprazolam (**4 samples**), and clobromazolam (**2 samples**).

### Percentage of opioids testing positive for medetomidine, past 6 months

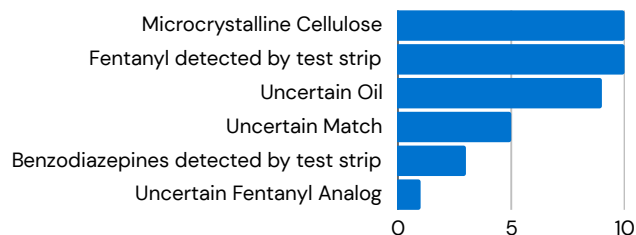


- Among opioid samples tested with medetomidine test strips in March, **33.2%** were positive for medetomidine (**251 of 506 samples**).
- There has been an increase in medetomidine in the unregulated drug supply. All health authorities have begun implementing medetomidine test strips at drug checking sites, as medetomidine is typically present in concentrations below the detection limit of the FTIR (<5%).

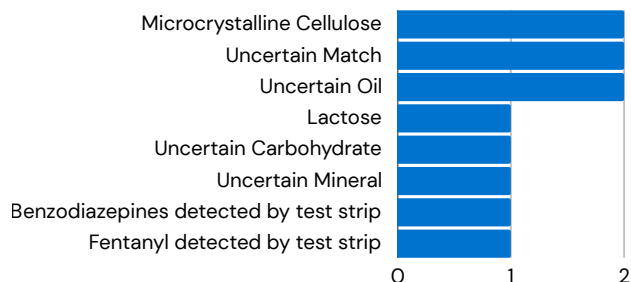
### Components detected in pharmaceutical opioids

(where expected drug was not detected)

#### Hydromorphone (N=10)



#### Oxycodone (N=2)

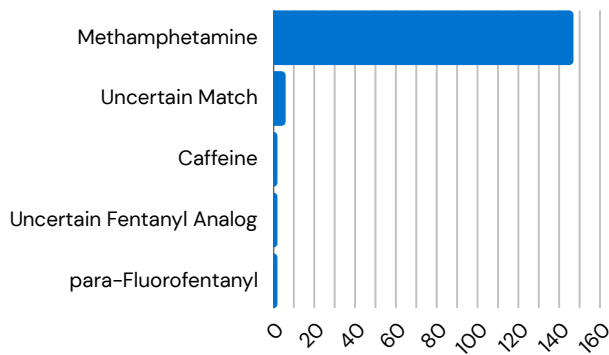


- In March, a total of **52 samples** were submitted as pharmaceutical opioids, which included **34 Hydromorphone (Dilaudid)**, **11 oxycodone (OxyContin)**, and **3 acetaminophen + oxycodone (Percocet)**.
- Of samples submitted as hydromorphone, **10** did not contain the expected drugs and instead contained unexpected active ingredients. The most common active ingredients detected were fentanyl/analogs detected by test strip/FTIR, and benzodiazepines detected by test strip.
- Of samples submitted as oxycodone, **2** did not contain the expected drugs and instead contained unexpected active ingredients. The most common active ingredients detected were fentanyl/analogs and benzodiazepines detected by test strip.

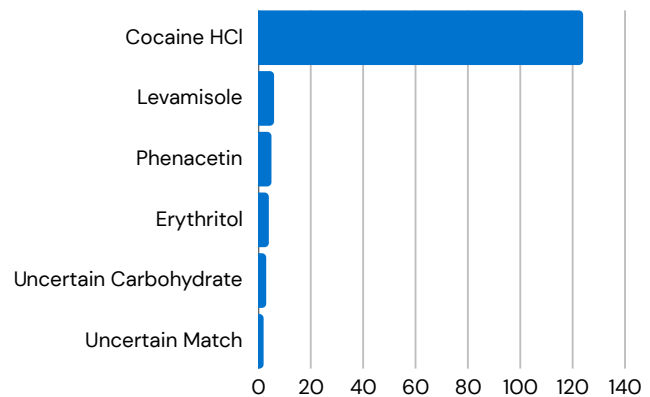
### Non-Opioids

#### Components detected in stimulants

Components in methamphetamine (N=127)

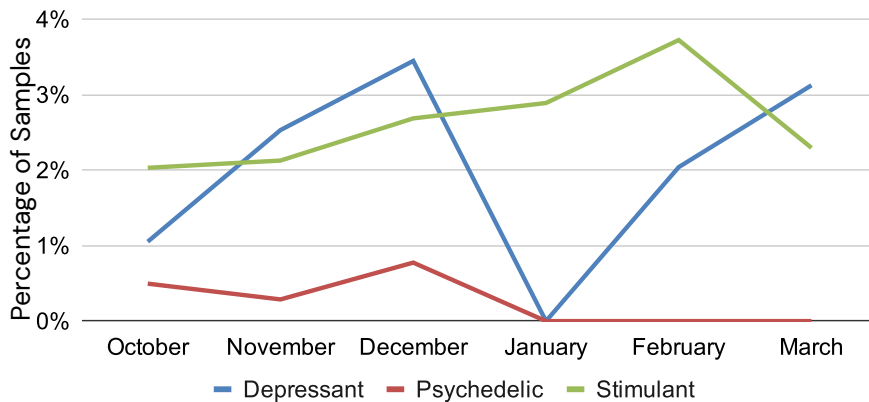


Components in cocaine (N=124)



Additional components detected a single time of samples have been omitted from these charts. All sample data can be found on our [dashboard](#)

#### Fentanyl detected in non-opioids, past 6 months



- In March, a total of **11 non-opioid samples** tested positive for fentanyl by FTIR and/or test strip. This included **8 stimulants** (methamphetamine and crack cocaine), and **3 depressants** (unknown benzodiazepines and medetomidine).
- Of these, **1 sample (9.1%)** was expected to be cross-contaminated by the service user, noting it had been stored with opioids prior to submitting the sample for drug checking.

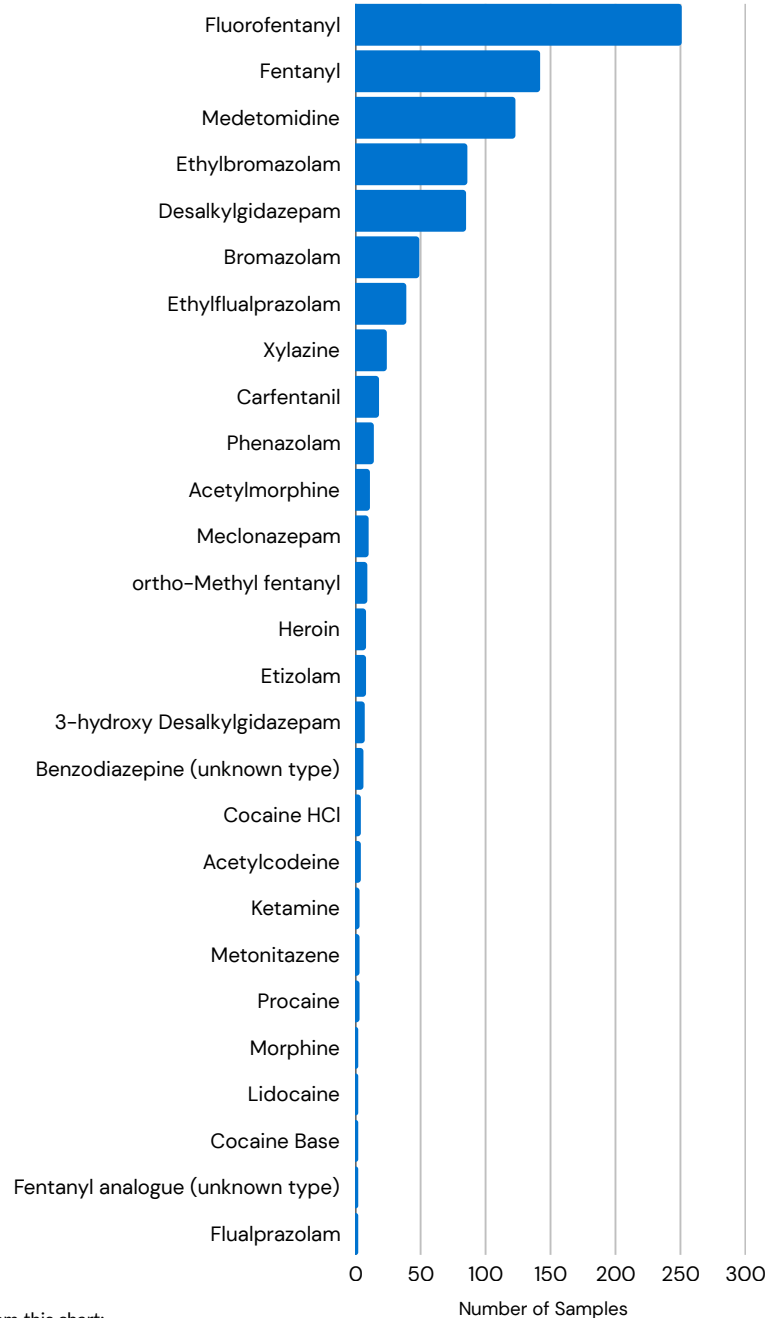
## PSMS Secondary Testing Results Summary

A subset of samples were sent for secondary testing provided by Substance at the University of Victoria, using Paper-Spray Mass Spectrometry (PSMS). PSMS is a highly sensitive technology, and can detect components in samples below the detection limit of the FTIR (<5%). Below is a summary of all active components detected in opioid samples sent in confirmatory testing. For more information about Substance please visit their [website](#).

### Total opioids sent to Substance

Health Authority	Number of Samples
Fraser Health	164
Interior Health	110
Northern Health	21
Island Health	20
Vancouver Coastal Health	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>325</b>

### Active components detected (n=325)



To save space, additional components detected a single time have been omitted from this chart: MDMA, Methamphetamine, Codeine, Diclofenac, Flubromazepam, Despropionyl para-fluorofentanyl, Phenacetin

### Public Health Notifications

Date & Location	Expected Drug	Spectrometry Results	Fentanyl Strip	Benzo Strip	Alert Message
March 27, 2026 Vancouver	Down	Caffeine, Fentanyl, and Erythritol	Positive	Negative	Light purple chunk sold as down in the DTES of Vancouver tested positive for fentanyl and medetomidine, a non-opioid tranquilizer. Substance caused overdose.
March 27, 2026 Vancouver	Down	Medetomidine, Uncertain Match	Positive	Negative	White powder and light pink powder sold as down in South Vancouver tested positive for fentanyl and medetomidine, a non-opioid tranquilizer.
March 31, 2026 Vancouver	Down	Fentanyl, Fluorofentanyl, Medetomidine, Benzodiazepines*	N/A	N/A	Multiple samples (red or green chunks, beige granules) sold as down in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver tested positive for fentanyl and/or fluorofentanyl and medetomidine, a non-opioid tranquilizer. Beige granules also tested positive for multiple benzos. May cause low heart rate and prolonged sedation.

All spectrometry results are determined by FTIR, with the exception of the following:  
 \* Results provided by complementary testing partner [Substance](#) using Paper Spray Mass Spectrometry

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.

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

### About this data

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

**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.

We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of [our partners](#) to collect this data.

To find drug checking services in your area please visit our [site locator](#).