

The Positive Post

APRIL 2024 NEWSLETTER

What are nitazene opioids?

Nitazene opioids were synthesized in the 1950s to relieve pain but were never clinically approved for market. Most nitazene opioids are stronger than fentanyl – and therefore classified as “high-potency opioids” by Toronto’s Drug Checking Service.

Have you noticed this in our local supply?

- Engage and ask for Lacie our Harm Reduction Outreach Coordinator and share your experience.
- Learn how to make a safety plan if you are using the unregulated drug supply.
- Email your questions to Lacie, outreachhr@positivepathways.com

Toronto’s Drug Checking Service first identified nitazene opioid in Toronto’s unregulated fentanyl supply in February 2021. Between February 12, 2021, and March 8, 2024, Toronto’s Drug Checking Service has:

Identified 10 different nitazene opioids in samples checked, including 4'-hydroxynitazene, 5-aminoisotonitazene, etodesnitazene, etonitazene, etonitazepyne, isotonitazene/protonitazene, metonitazene, N-desethyl etonitazene, N-desethyl isotonitazene, and protonitazepyne.

WOW! That is a lot of big words but the important thing to know is these are lethal doses and highly toxic putting you at an increased risk to experience a fatal overdose.

You can learn more about these drugs, including their suspected strength as compared to fentanyl using the drug dictionary @ [Drug Dictionary - Toronto's Drug Checking Service](#). You can also send a sample of your supply by mail. If you require more information on how to test your substance, ask our Harm Reduction Support Workers for a printout at the Needle Syringe Program (NSP) window.



What can you do?

Carry and be trained to use naloxone. N-desethyl etonitazene and protonitazepyne are opioids, meaning naloxone should reverse their effects in an overdose situation.

However, since N-desethyl etonitazene and protonitazepyne are so strong, greater than normal doses of naloxone may be required to rouse individuals experiencing an overdose. Oxygen is often also provided in community health settings as a comprehensive overdose response.

Remember to call 911 first, specifically when benzodiazepine-related drugs and or veterinary tranquilizers are present, and overdoses are therefore only partially reversed with naloxone.

Get your drugs checked, ideally before using, and provided services are available to you.

The ongoing pause in services at SafePoint means that the option to use at the consumption and treatment service site are currently unavailable. When using:

- Use with someone else and take turns spotting each other. If you must use alone, let someone know before you use.
- **Have you tried the Brave.coop app?** If you haven't you can access resources at the NSP window.
- **Do a small test dose first.**
- If your drugs did not contain what you were expecting, proceed with caution when considering **talking to the person you got your drugs from**, or get your drugs from another source if possible.

There is no regulated safe supply offered in our community currently, consider talking to a health care professional about your options.