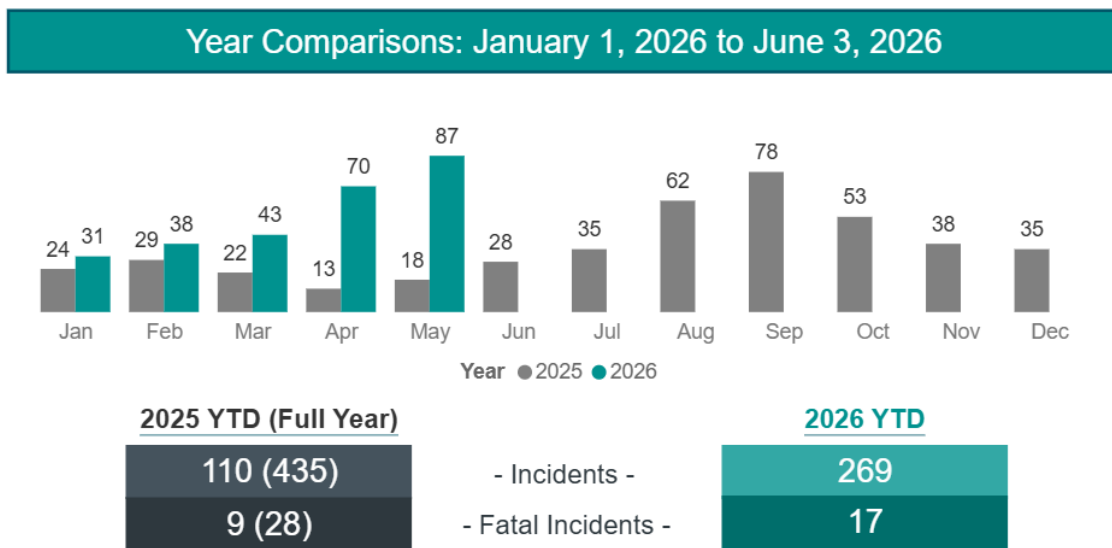


# COMMUNITY ADVISORY

**SUBJECT:** Increase in Drug Poisoning Incidents in Guelph-Wellington  
**Date:** June 1, 2026  
**Pages:** 2  
**To:** Community Partners  
**From:** April Pollington, Manager of Clinical Services

Reported drug poisoning incidents in the Guelph-Wellington region have increased substantially in 2026. Organizations are encouraged to review the information below with clients who use substances to minimize the risk of a drug poisoning.

## Year-to-Date Overview



Year to date (YTD) refers to the period of time from January 1 to June 3.

May 2026 recorded the highest number of drug poisoning incidents in Guelph-Wellington region since local surveillance began.

FAST data shows that 248 of the 269 drug poisoning incidents (92%) reported to date in 2026 occurred in the City of Guelph; however, most associated fatalities continue to occur in Wellington County. Of the 17 drug-related fatalities WDGPH is aware of since January 1, 2026, 11 (65%) occurred in Wellington County.

## The Current Unregulated Drug Supply

Data from the Toronto Drug Checking Services, supported by insights from local organizations serving people who use substances, confirms the presence of medetomidine in our local unregulated drug supply. As of April 2026, Toronto Drug Checking Services data, drawn from fentanyl samples collected across the province, found veterinary tranquilizers present in 86% of samples tested.<sup>1</sup>

Medetomidine is increasingly being used to cut into drugs circulating in the unregulated market. It can cause deep, prolonged sedation and significant cardiovascular effects. Medetomidine is not reversed by naloxone, which complicates the response to drug poisoning. For more information, please refer to this [resource by Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health](#).

## **Harm Reduction Reminders**

Please share the following safety information with clients who use substances:

- **Avoid using substances alone.** Call the National Overdose Response Services (NORS) at 1-888-688-NORS (6677) if you're by yourself. Call before you use for non-judgmental phone monitoring and drug poisoning prevention support.
- **Start low, go slow.** Potency can vary significantly, particularly with unregulated substances. There may also be contaminants (something other than the substance you think you are getting) mixed in which can increase risk and the chance of a drug poisoning or medical emergency.
- **Avoid mixing substances.** Combining substances, including alcohol or prescription medications, increases drug poisoning risk.
- **Carry naloxone** if opioids may be involved and know how to use it. ***It's important to note that naloxone will not reverse non-opioid toxicity.***
- **Test your supply** where drug checking services are available. Please review the [Harm Reduction Access Guide](#) for more information, as well as [this resource](#) which outlines how drugs are tested.
- **Here 24/7.** Connect to substance use and mental health supports. More information [here](#).
- **Stay hydrated and nourished.**  
**Know the signs of drug poisoning (due to opioid toxicity) and be aware that non-opioid toxicity can show up as other symptoms:**
  - Slow, shallow, or absent breathing
  - Blue or grey lips or fingernails
  - Unresponsive or cannot be woken
  - Gurgling or choking sounds
  - Unable to rouse or remain alert
- **Call 911 immediately** if you suspect a drug poisoning, it is important to seek medical attention for yourself or the individual.

**For more information on available harm reduction supports in Guelph-Wellington, please review the May-June 2026 [Harm Reduction Access Guide](#).**

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) tracks drug poisoning incidents using several sources. These include hospital emergency visits, reported deaths, and FAST, a tool developed by WDGPH. FAST collects reports from many community organizations, such as police, community health centres, shelters, counselling services, and harm reduction programs. This helps give a fuller picture of what is happening in the community, because many people who use substances do not go to the hospital or call emergency services.

If you or your agency would like to be onboarded as a community partner to the FAST Surveillance System, please contact Jacob Mackinlay at: [Jacob.MacKinlay@wdgpublichealth.ca](mailto:Jacob.MacKinlay@wdgpublichealth.ca)

### **For more information, please contact:**

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### **References:**

1. Toronto Drug Checking Services. What's in Toronto's drug supply? Available at: [Graphs - Toronto's Drug Checking Service](#)