



## ***PUBLIC ADVISORY***

### **Increase in Suspected Opioid Overdoses in St. John's Metro Area**

**April 27, 2017 – St. John's, NL:** Eastern Health is advising the public of an increase in the number of serious overdoses related to an opioid being sold as heroin in the St. John's metro area. As a result of this identified trend, Eastern Health is asking the public to be on high alert for possible overdoses, and to use extreme caution if consuming illicit drugs.

To date, Eastern Health is aware of approximately 15 reported overdoses in the past two weeks, including at least one death. The majority of these overdoses appear to be in relation to the use of an opioid being sold as heroin. Laboratory testing is currently underway to determine if fentanyl was present in these cases. Fentanyl cannot be seen, tasted or smelled when it is contained in illicit drugs.

If an overdose is suspected, the public is advised to immediately call 911 or proceed to the nearest emergency department.

Symptoms of an opioid overdose, include:

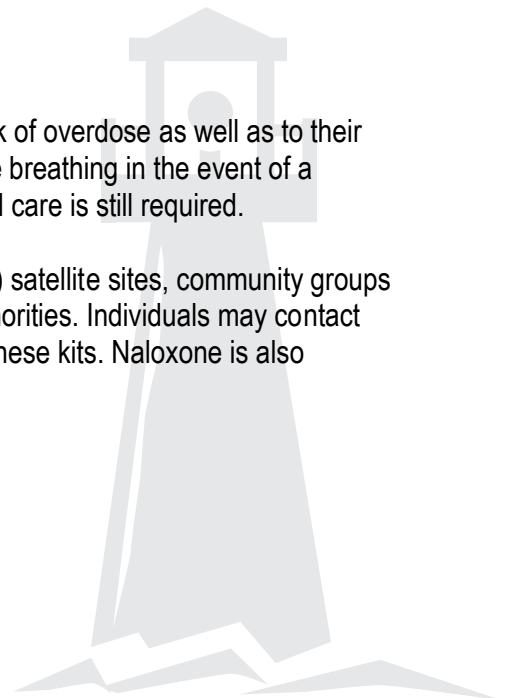
- Slow or absent breathing
- Blue or purple lips and fingernails
- Not moving
- Choking
- Gurgling sounds or snoring
- Cannot be woken up
- Cold and clammy skin
- Tiny pupils

Take-home naloxone kits are available for individuals who are at high risk of overdose as well as to their friends and family to administer if overdose occurs. Naloxone can restore breathing in the event of a fentanyl or other opioid overdose. It is temporary and emergency medical care is still required.

Naloxone take home kits are available through SWAP (needle exchange) satellite sites, community groups and Mental Health and Addictions services in all four regional health authorities. Individuals may contact the provincial Healthline at 811 to locate the nearest distribution site for these kits. Naloxone is also available at emergency rooms and via paramedics and police.

- 30 -

**Media Contact:**  
Tracey Boland



Media Relations Manager

Eastern Health

T: (709) 777-1412

[TraceyL.Boland@easternhealth.ca](mailto:TraceyL.Boland@easternhealth.ca)