

Risk of death and severe overdose linked to consumption of blue pills

The Direction régionale de santé publique du CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal (DRSP de Montréal) has received a report of a case presenting signs and symptoms of severe overdose with respiratory distress requiring intensive care and prolonged hospitalization. This event occurred following ingestion of a blue pill with rounded corners and marked "A/215". This product is a possible counterfeit of a 30 mg oxycodone tablet, an opioid normally available with a prescription. At this time, the event is still under investigation and the content of the pill has yet to be confirmed.

In the past ([Alerte surdose 5 novembre 2020-1.pdf \(santemontreal.qc.ca\)](#)), similar pills have been available on the illicit market and contained a synthetic opioid more powerful than fentanyl. Opioids are associated with a high risk of death, especially for users who can be exposed unknowingly. A person overdosing on opioids may present the following symptoms: *extreme drowsiness, snoring, myosis (pinpoint pupils), difficulty breathing and cyanosis (blue lips and nails)*. These symptoms are likely to cause *cardiopulmonary arrest*.

Naloxone is needed to reverse overdose effects. In case of overdose, call 911 immediately for rapid, effective intervention. Hospitalization may be required for naloxone administration under medical supervision or for airway management.

We urge you to be vigilant and to inform us of any unusual situation by using the [overdose reporting form](#).
https://santemontreal.qc.ca/fileadmin/fichiers/professionnels/DRSP/sujets-a-z/Surdoses/Alertes-outils/Fiche_Signalement_Surdose_vfinale_septembre2021.pdf

The DRSP urges street drug users to be careful, regardless of consumption method (ingestion, inhalation, injection or other). Public Health also encourages clinicians and care providers to increase interventions to prevent deaths in this population:

1. Share information about the risks of severe overdose and death related to use of blue pills with the appearance described above.
2. Provide counselling on lower-risk drug use practices:
 - For people who inject, use supervised consumption services regularly:
<https://santemontreal.qc.ca/en/public/support-and-services/supervised-injection-services/>
 - Avoid using alone.
 - When using with other people, don't all use at the same time.
 - Use drug checking services ([Public \(santemontreal.qc.ca\)](#))
 - If possible, use fentanyl test strips, but know that the test strips do not detect isotonitazene or other nitazenes.
 - Reduce the amount of a drug you intend to use when testing its effects.
 - Have naloxone close at hand in large enough quantities and know how to use it if someone shows signs of overdose. In case of doubt, don't hesitate to use it (naloxone is not dangerous, even if it isn't necessary).
 - Call 911 if someone overdoses (the *Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act* provides immunity from simple possession charges for anyone who calls 911 about an overdose).
3. Inform and, if needed, accompany users so they can obtain naloxone for free in community pharmacies and organizations listed in the INSPQ directory.
<https://www.inspq.qc.ca/sites/default/files/cartes/naloxone/index.html>

For more information:

<https://santemontreal.qc.ca/en/professionnels/drsp/sujets-de-a-a-z/surdoses/prevention-des-surdoses-liees-aux-drogues/>