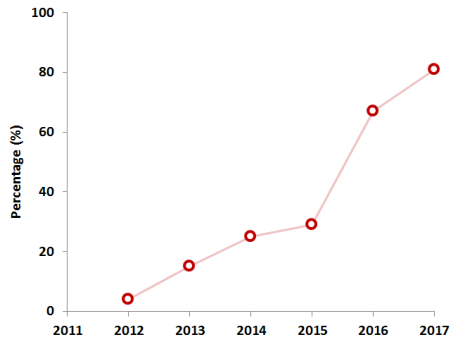


**BCTOX's Toxicology Surveillance of Drug Overdoses and Forensic Toxicology in BC (i)  
 MARCH (last update) 2018**

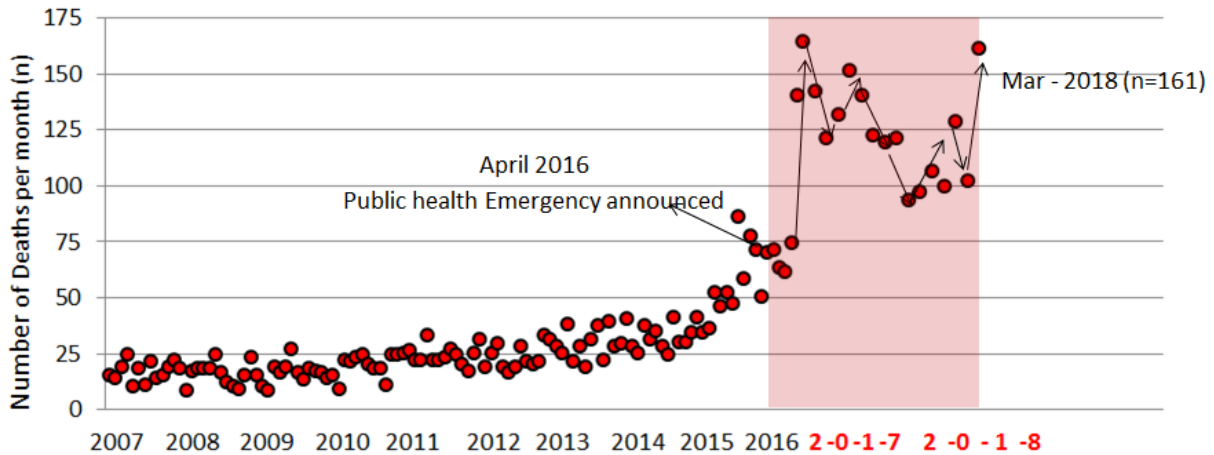
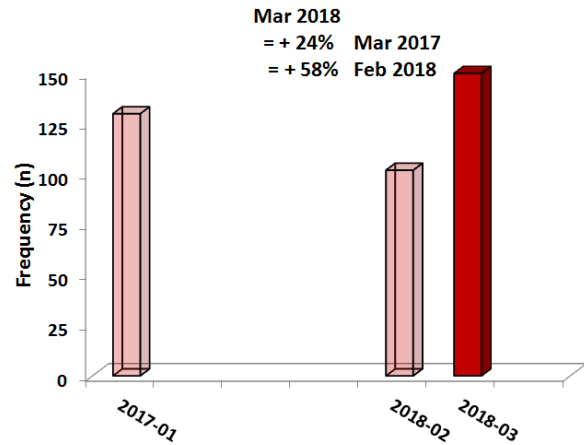
**Fentanyl Detected Illicit Drug Overdose Deaths in BC  
 (2012- 2017 July)**

Data from (BC Coroners Service 2017-12-31) - ] (accessed Feb 20, 2018) [BCTOX graph]



**Estimation of Illicit drug overdose attributed deaths in BC  
 in March 2018 (accessed May 28, 2018)**

The number of Illicit drug overdose deaths in March 2018 was 161 (Data from the BC Coroners Service 2018-05-10), which is 24% higher than March 2017, and 58% higher than last month (accessed May 28, 2018) [BCTOX graph]



**Illicit drug overdose deaths per month in BC (2007 to Ma4, 2018)** [Data from BCCoronersService 2018-05-10]. [BCTOX graph] The pattern of overdose deaths suggests that the sharp increase in deaths has reached a plateau. (accessed May 28, 2018) [LAST UPDATE]

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## Drug testing in Vancouver

Reza Afshari, Environmental Health Services, BC Centre for Disease Control, BC. [Reza.Afshari@bccdc.ca](mailto:Reza.Afshari@bccdc.ca)

The BC Coroners Service reported that highly potent fentanyl was detected in 83% of 1,400 overdose deaths in BC in 2016,<sup>1</sup> which is the main cause of increased overdose deaths in BC. March 2018 represents deadliest, but December 2017, month for illicit-drug overdose deaths in BC.<sup>2</sup>

Drug testing would act as an effective personalized health message to the clients, and they may adopt safer drug-use practices. According to a recent study, Insite clients who checked prior to consumption and got a positive result were 10 times more likely to reduce their dose and clients who reduced their dose were 25% less likely to overdose.<sup>3</sup>



Photo adopted from Vancouver coastal Health News Release.<sup>3</sup>

Recently, a drug-checking machine (Fourier-Transform Infrared Spectrometer (FTIR) on site) is being offered to BC music festivals as summer season approaches.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, in a pilot study in rural areas of BC, 24 participants completed the urine test at the time of the first interview. Among them, 4 had a positive fentanyl urine test. Later 15 clients completed the second questionnaire, 10 of whom reported introducing a behavior change after testing and the remaining 5 indicated being already engaged in harm reduction practices. All 4 clients who tested positive completed the second questionnaire; all but one indicated adopting behaviors towards overdose prevention.<sup>5</sup>

In another study, willingness of people who inject drugs for drug checking offered within supervised injection services were studied among 180 subjects.<sup>6</sup> Positive associations with willingness to frequently check drugs at supervised injection services were reported for females (adjusted Odds Ratio 95% CI = 2.31 (1.20-4.46)), homelessness (2.36 (1.14-4.86)), and drug dealing (2.16 (1.07-4.33)).

In addition, drug testing leads to an accountability mechanism that comes into place between a dealer and a consumer or consumer safety principle that does not exist otherwise.<sup>7</sup>

Future interventions could include (1) offering the program outside of supervised consumption sites<sup>7</sup>, (2) attracting the population at greater risk such as people using at home alone.<sup>7</sup>



Insite offers drug testing Monday-Wednesday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. PT. (Radio-Canada). Photo adopted from CBCNews.<sup>1</sup>

Since overdose prevention sites have opened in BC, 800,000 people have visited the sites, saving 4,500 lives from possible fatal overdoses according to Judy Darcy.<sup>2</sup>

## Mother's day – May 13

Different Mother's Day wish for B.C. moms working to save lives in fentanyl crisis.<sup>8</sup>

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