

Substance Drug Checking

An overview of the technologies used, information provided, limitations, and how to access the service.

Substance offers a free and confidential drug checking program in Victoria. Their team uses multiple drug checking instruments and technologies to determine a sample's main active ingredients, fillers or cutting agents, any unexpected drugs, and the presence of fentanyl.

Substance also supports drug checking services in Duncan, Campbell River, Comox Valley, Port Alberni and Port Hardy. They also have a system for mail-in drug checking, allowing people to discretely access drug checking from any community across Vancouver Island and retrieve their results privately from a computer, tablet or smart phone.

Key Instruments and Technologies Used



Paper-Spray Ionization
Mass Spectrometry



FTIR - Infrared Absorption
Spectroscopy



Raman Spectroscopy



Immunoassay Test Strips

Drug checking technicians use a combination of scientific instruments and technologies to provide the most accurate information relevant to the drug samples they analyze. This includes the use of a paper-spray mass spectrometer machine providing the gold standard in drug checking, an FTIR spectrometer widely used by drug checking services provincially, a raman spectrometer, and immunoassay test strips that are highly sensitive and capable of detecting low concentrations of fentanyl, fentanyl analogues, benzodiazepines and xylazine.

What they can usually tell you about a sample:

- The main active ingredient
- Contaminants (such as other unexpected drugs)
- Inert 'cutting agents' or 'buff' used as filler
- Approximate amount of active ingredient compared to other ingredients
- Presence of fentanyl and fentanyl analogues, even in trace amounts (using test strips)

What they cannot tell you about a sample:

- If it is pure
- The exact percentages of different ingredients in the mixture
- If there's something in the mixture that is not in their reference database
- They may not be able to detect all substances present, some potent substances can toxic at low levels

Please visit the Substance website to learn how to submit a sample and retrieve results using their mail-in drug checking service, and to review their weekly and monthly reports and research.



substance.uvic.ca



Resources for Connection to Counselling, Treatment and Recovery Services

Island Health - Mental Health and Substance Use Service Link:

For additional information or help navigating services, call Island Health's Mental Health and Substance Use Service Link. **1-888-885-8824**

BC Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Service:

Provides a free, confidential phone service for people throughout BC. Offers information and referral to counselling and treatment services. **1-800-663-1441**

First Nations Health Authority - Mental Health and Wellness Supports

Culturally safe and trauma-informed services. Supports available 24hrs a day. Services covered by First Nations Health Benefits.



Orca Lelum - Youth Wellness Centre (Nanoose Bay):

The Orca Lelum Wellness Centre offers medically supervised withdrawal support, mental health crisis supports and holistic live-in wellness for youth age 12-18. **250-755-2144**

Tsow-Tun Le Lum Society - Substance Use and Trauma Treatment Centre (Duncan):

If you are in urgent need of support by phone, call their toll-free support line. **1-888-403-3123**

Health Promotion Resources

Island Health - How to Respond to an Opioid Poisoning

Call 9-1-1, provide rescue breathing, administer Naloxone, stay with the person.



Toward the Heart - Harm Reduction Services - Site Finder

Type in community, distance you can travel, and the types of supplies or service (ie. Naloxone, overdose prevention). Please contact sites to confirm address, hours of operation and supply availability.



Government of Canada - Good Samaritan Overdose Act

This exempts people seeking emergency medical or law enforcement assistance at an overdose from being charged with simple possession.



Vancouver Island Crisis Line - 1-888-494-3888

24hr crisis line for residents on Vancouver Island that provides short-term, non-judgmental support, crisis intervention, information and resources.

KUU-US Crisis Line Society - 1-800-588-8717

BC wide Indigenous toll-free crisis and support line. If you are facing a difficult situation, call now.

National Overdose Response Service (NORS) - 1-88-688-6677

NORS is an overdose prevention hotline for Canadians providing loving, confidential, non-judgemental support for you, whenever and wherever you use drugs.