

## Stimulant Use and COVID-19

In keeping with the Howard County Health Department Bureau of Behavioral Health's mission "to promote, preserve, and protect the behavioral health of all in Howard County", we are providing this information to support our residents who may use drugs. The Howard County Health Department does not condone the buying, selling or use of illicit substances.

COVID-19 can stay undetectable for up to 2 weeks, which means that a person who is infected may not show symptoms. Taking steps to reduce harm is essential to lower your chances of contracting and/or spreading COVID-19. This can be done by:

- Wearing a mask when out and/or around others.
- Trying to limit interaction with others as much as possible.
- Washing your hands frequently for 20 seconds (sing "Happy Birthday" twice).
- If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer or wear disposable gloves and change them frequently.

If consuming substances during COVID-19, be mindful to safeguard your health. It is possible that the virus could be on the surface of packages/containers, surfaces, clothing, and skin. Upon receiving your substance(s):

- Wash your hands.
- Wipe down your packages and if possible, transfer your substances to a new and clean container/package.
- Wipe down any surfaces you use to prepare your substances. If cleaning the surface is not possible, lining your area with newspaper is a safer option.
- Before using the substance, it is important to test the original container for Fentanyl with a Fentanyl test strip.
- After testing, dispose of the testing items and original package into a container, like a soda can (that can be crushed) or a Ziploc bag and then place into a trashcan. This will limit the possibility of COVID-19 exposure to others when disposing mindfully.
- Make sure to wash your hands again after use.

Consuming by inhalation, ingestion, insertion, or injection increases your risk of contracting COVID-19. Some tips to help lower your risk include:

- If possible, stock up on substances & equipment you may need to limit the times you have to go outside and to ensure that you continue to have what you need. Rationing is also a good idea.

- When ingesting your substance (in any way), try to use new and/or single use items to reduce harm. This could include using new: syringes, post it notes, straws, and/or pen tubes. If this is not possible, make sure to clean your equipment after each use.
- Make sure you are not sharing your equipment with others! This includes smoking equipment.
- If snorting your substance, wetting your nostrils with water or saline before & after can help lower your risk of infection by reducing the damage done to your nose.
- If smoking your substance, use a rubber bumper from a sparkplug or wrap a rubber band around the end of your smoking equipment to reduce the possibility of being burnt. Condoms can be used to hold blowback smoke and inhaled again to maximize your substance.
- Keep yourself hydrated. This can help to keep your gums and mouth healthy and free from sores that can raise your risk of becoming infected.
- Start low and go slow after letting a support person know! Make sure that someone knows that you will be using, either in person or by phone, and have them check in with you. Have Narcan available and make sure you are easily accessible with unlocked doors. This can increase safety while consuming.

If participating in sexual activities, ensure you are practicing safely. This can include using condoms, dental dams, lubricants, and wearing gloves. Make sure you wash your hands before and after activities and wear a mask, if possible. Reducing interaction between you and your partner(s) and reducing your number of partners can lower your risk of contracting COVID-19.

**For Additional Support Contact:**

Howard County Health Department Peer Support Line: **667-203-1253**

Grassroots Crisis Center 24/7 Crisis Line: **410-531-6677**

[naloxoneforall.org/maryland](http://naloxoneforall.org/maryland)