



Frequently Asked Questions —Benzodiazepine Test Strips—

BENZODIAZEPINE (BENZO) TEST STRIPS

What are benzo test strips?

Benzo test strips look similar to fentanyl test strips. They are used to look for the presence of benzodiazepines in a drug sample.

What are the limitations of benzo test strips?

Benzo test strips have many limitations.

- The benzo test strips can detect some kinds of benzos, but not all. For example, they are not good at detecting etizolam, which is one of the most common benzos in the current drug supply.
- Like the fentanyl test strips, benzo test strips cannot determine the strength (quantity) or what type of benzo is present in the sample.
- Benzodiazepines do not dissolve well in water. This can lead to false negatives, which can be very dangerous. More research is being done on how to prevent this.
- Results can be very faint and difficult to read.

Where in Interior Health can a person get their drugs checked using benzo test strips?

Drug checking with benzo test strips is available through our partners that offer FTIR testing (ASK Wellness, UBCO HaRt team, ANKORS), IH Supervised Consumption and Overdose Prevention Sites, as well as some IH Overdose Prevention Nurses. Visit www.drugchecking.ca to search drug checking locations by community. Each site has a list of tests offered.

Why is the roll out of benzo test strips limited to select sites?

Because of the limitations of the test and the risk of false negatives benzo test strips are best done in conjunction with other drug checking services – ideally an FTIR, fentanyl test strips and access to a senior drug checking technician for consultation.

Are benzo test strips available on a “take home” basis like fentanyl test strips are?

No - benzo test strips are not available for take home due to the limitations with the testing process and interpretation as well as the risk of false negatives. At this time, Interior Health does not recommend handing out the strips for take home purposes. We are working with the BC Centre for Substance Use (BCCSU) to study if and how this can be done safely in the future.

When will Interior Health expand benzo test strip drug checking to other sites?

Right now, we have no plans to expand the program. We cannot ethically do so until we understand the testing process better and know how to reduce the risk of false negatives. We are working with the BCCSU on this.

What if our site wants to offer benzo test strips on our own?

Given the limitations and risks, we do not recommend offering benzo testing at this time. Interior Health will not be able to provide testing supplies or endorsement. We recommend you contact the [Interior Health Harm Reduction team](#) to discuss this further.