


Exemption from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act

Personal possession of small amounts of certain illegal drugs in British Columbia (January 31, 2023 to January 31, 2026)


The Province of British Columbia requested a subsection 56(1) exemption under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (CDSA). After a thorough assessment, this exemption was granted by the federal Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health to support the province in implementing its comprehensive public health response to the overdose crisis.

Note: At the request of BC, where this exemption applies has been amended as of September 18, 2023.



 **WHO**

Adults 18+ in BC

 **WHEN**

From January 31, 2023 until January 31, 2026

 **WHERE**


The province of BC only

 **WHAT**

Adults 18+ in BC will not be arrested or charged for the possession of a cumulative amount of up to 2.5 grams of these illegal drugs for personal use:

- + Opioids (including heroin, morphine, and fentanyl)
- + Cocaine (including crack and powder cocaine)
- + Methamphetamine (meth)
- + MDMA (ecstasy)

Evidence on effective and safe threshold amounts of these drugs is limited. As this is the **first exemption of its kind in Canada**, ongoing monitoring will inform if it is contributing to its objectives which includes reducing stigma and substance use harms and increasing access to health and social services for people who use drugs in BC.

 **WHY**

This is an additional tool that the federal government is providing to BC to help address substance use harms, reduce stigma and prevent overdose deaths. **Ultimately, the goal is to save lives.** The Government of Canada continues to take a comprehensive approach to addressing substance use harms and the overdose crisis.

What remains illegal in BC

Unless authorized, any amount of illegal drugs, including the four listed in the exemption, cannot be possessed

- + in and surrounding elementary and secondary schools and child care facilities
- + in airports
- + within 15 m of a public outdoor playground, spray pool or wading pool, or skate park (as of September 18, 2023)

and cannot be

- + imported or exported
- + produced
- + given away, administered, supplied or sold