

Women-only safe injection site now open on Downtown Eastside

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There is growing interest in supervised injection sites like Vancouver's Insite as the overdose crisis worsens (Courtesy: Insite)

A new safe injection site is now open on the Downtown Eastside, targeting a group Vancouver Coastal Health says is not being reached: women.

The facility has the capacity to help 15 women at a time.

Bonnie Wilson with Vancouver Coastal Health says though the opioid crisis is hitting men the hardest, women are a large part of overdose statistics.

“We do know that about 20 per cent of the folks who are suffering from overdoses and deaths are women, so if there is even a portion of that population that we could save by offering a women-only service, I think it’s our moral and ethical obligation to move forward with that.”

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Though there are already four other overdose prevention sites in the area, Wilson says many women don’t feel comfortable or safe in mixed-gender locations.

“Imagine if you are on your own and you’re suffering from substance issues, maybe you have some mental health concerns. You are very, very marginalized by the system.”

Wilson says nurses will also offer women-specific health services like pregnancy testing, as well as opioid replacement therapy.

This is Vancouver’s fifth overdose prevention site, and like other sites, it will have an annual cost of \$200,000.

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