



# DRUG CHECKING

**PRESENTED BY FOLKS WHO AREN'T SCIENTISTS**





**HELLO!**

So, you may or not be familiar with drug checking.

Well, even some of us who do it get confused by it!

But let's talk about the why, how and ways to talk with your program participants about it.



# HARM REDUCTION



Harm reduction is a comprehensive approach to provide care to people who use substances. Harm reduction workers are able to provide care, services, education and healthcare across an entire spectrum from substance use to total abstinence.

## **NON-COERCIVE**

We do not force or coerce people to change their behavior to receive respect, care and access.

## **REALISTIC GOALS**

We help folks set realistic goals determined by themselves not ourselves.

## **NON-JUDGEMENTAL**

We don't judge people for their current, former or intermittent use of any substances.

## **CONNECTION**

Harm reduction provides connection no matter what.

## **RESPECT**

No matter what you are putting in your body and how you are putting it there, we are here to support you.

## **RECOVERY**

Harm reduction respects and supports an individual's right to define their own recovery.



# DRUGS

Drugs are everywhere.

The current illicit (we are not including weed here) supply is full of substances that are constantly changing.

Because substances are illegal we are unable to provide a high level of safety to people who use them. Drug checking is one way to work with folks to be drug smart and safer during their use.

Humans use drugs because they feel good.

Humans use drugs because they help with pain in the head, heart and body.

Some people end up with a problematic relationship with substances, but not everyone.

Drug checking is a safe way to test substances that people put in their bodies.


Drugs would be safer without prohibition.






# DRUG CHECKING HISTORY

Mass spectrometry has its origin as early as 1907, Sir Joseph John "J. J." Thomson of the University of Cambridge was studying the structure and behavior of atoms and molecules.




1922 rolls around and Thomson's assistant makes something cooler.


Francis W. Aston is given the credit for really creating the 1st Mass Spectrometer.  
HOWEVER!  
It wasn't great with identifying more than one pure substance at a time.



1950s, GAS and MASS connect and we have GCMS.  
Gas Chromatography + Mass Spectrometer = drug checking ability



What do you think these chemists would think about us weirdos testing used drug trash at needle exchanges!





# DRUG CHECKING HISTORY PT.2

Drug checking is not new!

Harm reductionists have been doing it for many years.



Safe House  
Campaign  
-Netherlands-  
est.  
1989  
DT at raves and house  
parties - August De Loor

Drugs  
Information and  
Monitoring  
System (DIMS)  
-Netherlands-  
est.  
1992



Erowid  
est.  
1995  
<https://www.erowid.org/>

DanceSafe  
est.  
1998  
<https://dancesafe.org/>



Drugs  
Data  
est.  
2001  
<https://www.drugsdata.org/>

Fentanyl  
Test  
Strips  
est.  
2016  
Van Asher and Tito Fuentes at  
St. Anne's Corner in the Bronx

In 2002 the Dutch Government restricted the testing of drugs at house parties and events claiming it would be “misused to legitimate the use of ecstasy”. This decision was taken on the basis of a study on the efficacy of pill checking for monitoring purposes in different (existing) settings including office-based drug checking (with extended opening hours), in mobile facilities (a pill checking bus at parties), or checking drugs after being seized by security staff (Korf et al., 2003).



**TOUCHING  
FENTANYL**

**TOUCHING,  
LOOKING AT OR  
BEING IN THE  
SAME ROOM AS  
FENTANYL IS NOT  
GOING TO CAUSE  
AN OVERDOSE.**




**THINK ABOUT  
FOLKS WHO  
PRODUCE AND  
PACKAGE  
FENTANYL.**

Photo illustration by Lisa Larson-Walker. Photos by Jeremy Yap/Unsplash and Thinkstock.

**LIGHTHEADEDNESS, BREATHING, TALKING, ANXIETY OR A FIGHT OR FLIGHT  
RESPONSE, ARE NOT SIGNS OF OVERDOSE.**





**WHY TEST  
DRUGS?**

## LOVE

Love is providing care and non-judgemental, non-coercive care to people who use substances.



## RESPECT

Respect is providing knowledge and information to people that is safer out than in.



# SURVIVAL

## SAFETY

Supporting people's survival regardless of personal or public perception of using substances.



## AUTONOMY

Respecting the fact that we don't always know best. Not everyone who uses substances wants to stop or needs to stop.





## WHAT ABOUT THE COPS?

Folks ask this question with good reason!

Is this legal?

Can police come and arrest you?

Do they know about this?

Our answer is yes, they know.

Yes some participate in MADDs.

And yes we believe it is legal.



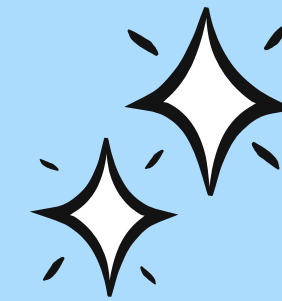
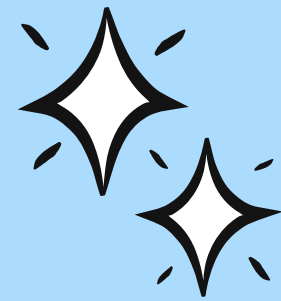
**THE PROCESS**



# **SCIENCE STUFF!**



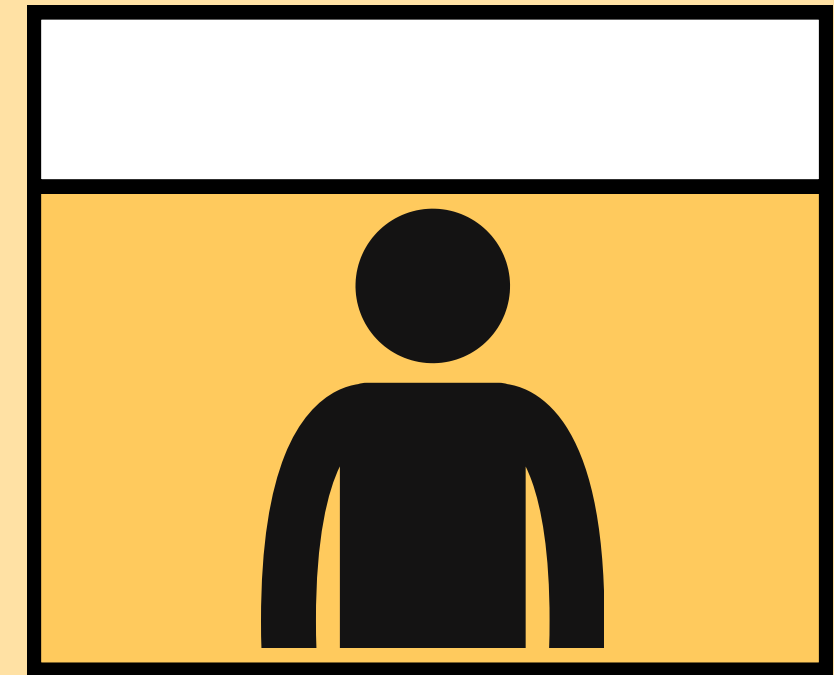
Drug testing is science, but it is also about building relationships, feeling like you have a PhD when you don't and getting to talk drug smart stuff with your folks!





# ACQUIRE

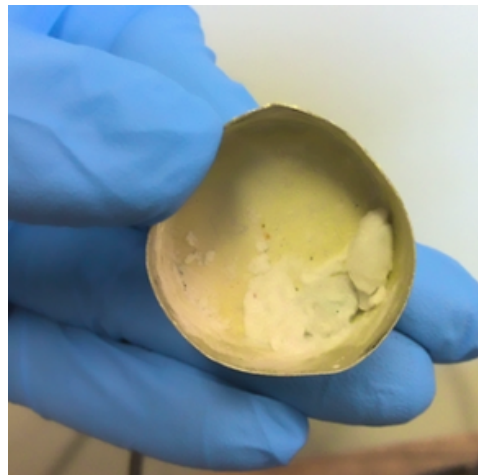
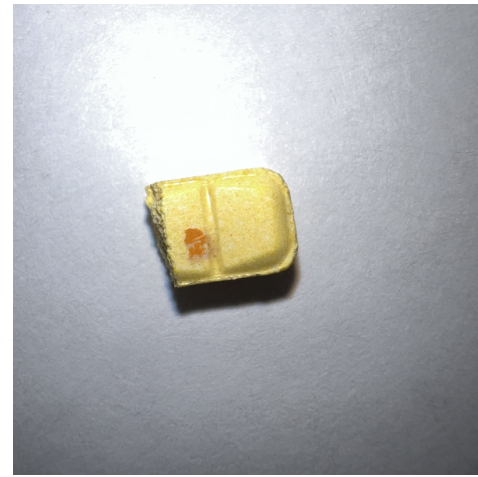
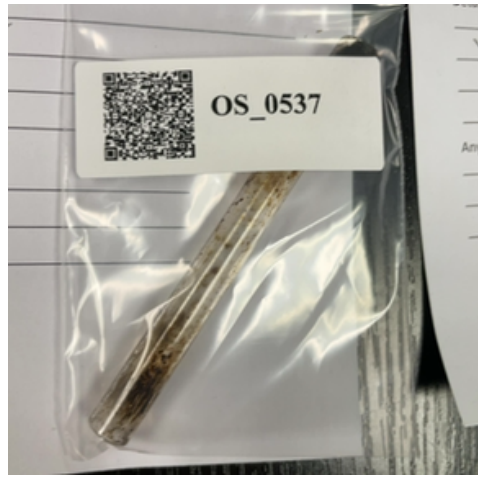
Get the sample of substance or drug trash from a person, your own submission or stuff you collected on the ground.



# TEST STRIP

We check it with a fentanyl test strip, sometimes a xylazine strip (although not sure those are accurate) and record that.



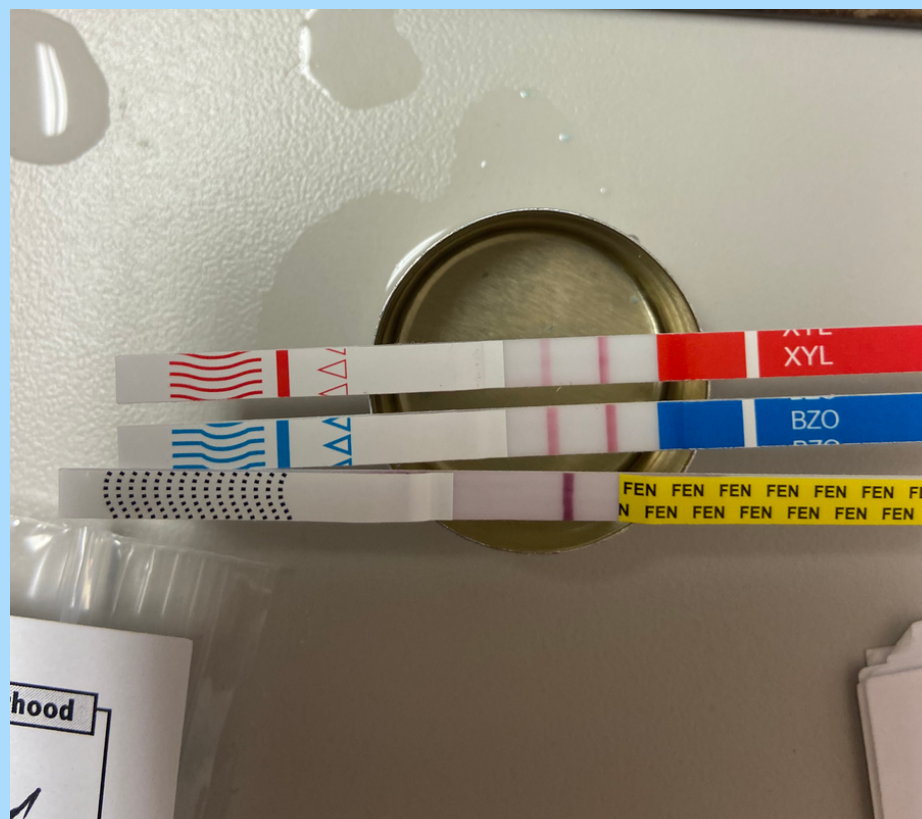


<b>POWDER</b>	<b>PILL</b>	<b>CONTAINER</b>
<b>PIPE</b>	<b>BAGGIE</b>	<b>PILL</b>
<b>COOKER</b>	<b>CAPSULE</b>	<b>DRUG SEIZURE</b>

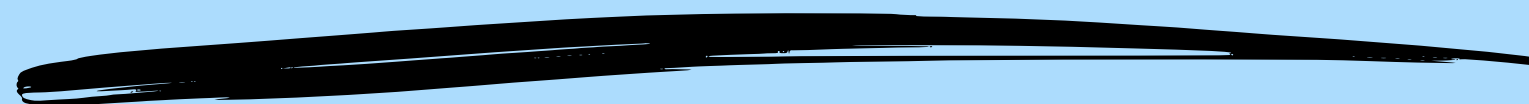
**SCIENCE WORD: DETRITUS - OUR WORDS: DRUG TRASH - STUFF YOU FIND ON THE GROUND**

# TEST STRIPS

- XYLAZINE\*\*\*
- FENTANYL
- BENZOS



Not all locations have access to all three types of strips, that's ok, we do the best we can with what we have!



\*\*\*Xylazine test strips accuracy and dilution are STILL PENDING.

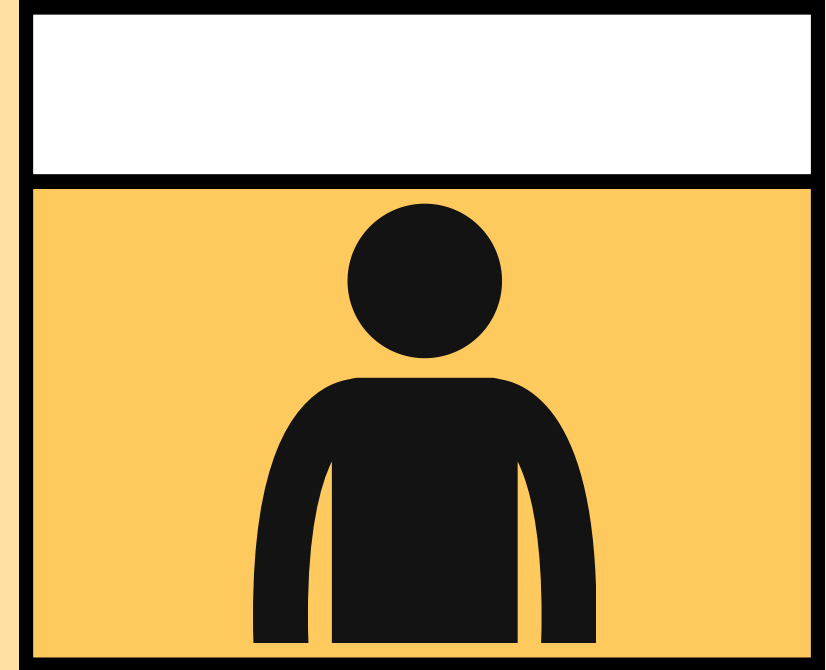
XTS test strip pilot through Brandeis project results will be released once complete.





# STREET CHECK

The presenters here work with a program called Street Check, it is a project out of Brandeis University. Some folks using it are scientists and research folks and some are harm reduction workers!



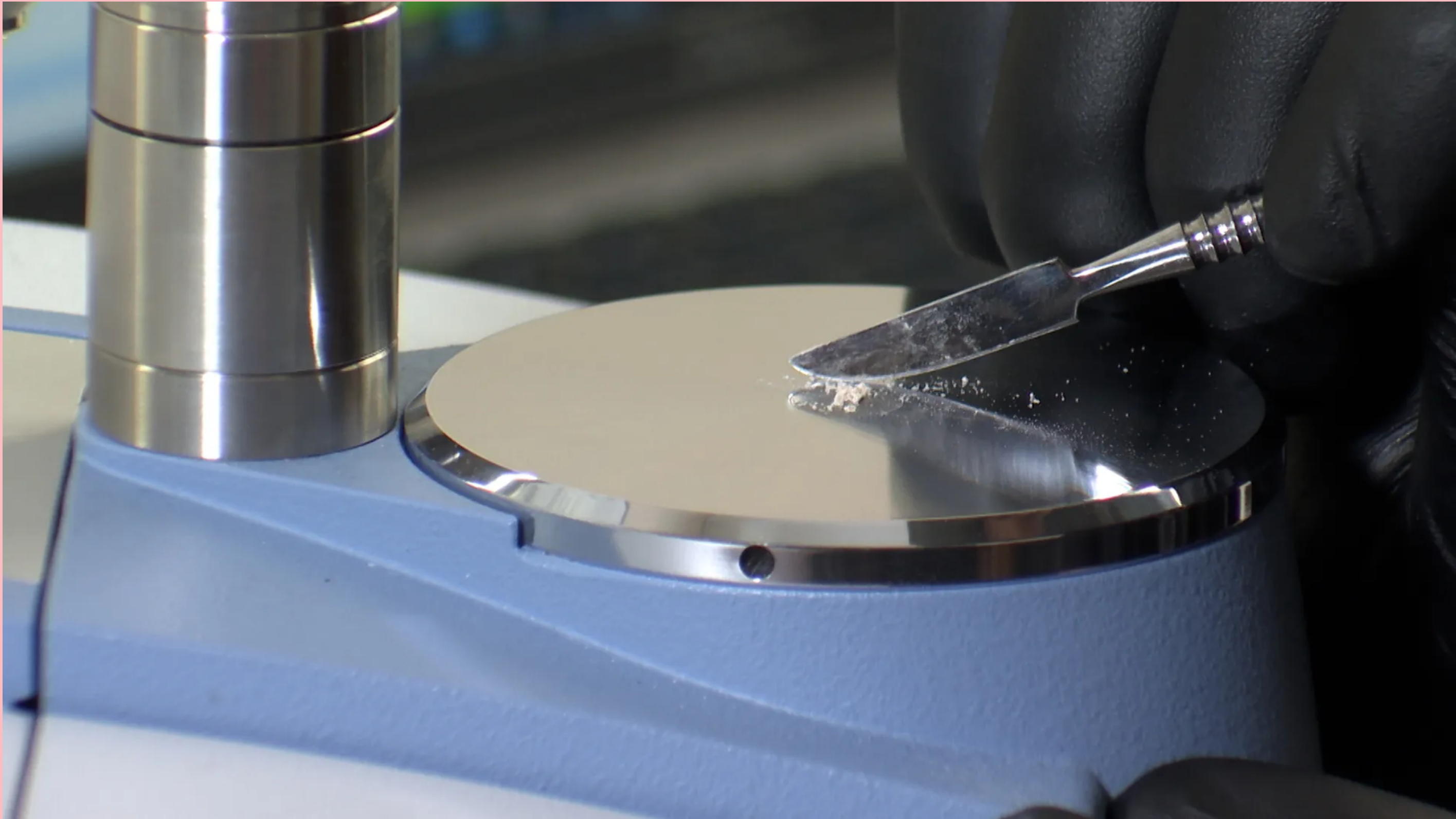
# MACHINE

The Bruker is a super technical machine that has stored drug libraries in a program called OPUS. We put some drug on the machine and it does some confusing stuff with light and lasers and gives us a reading.





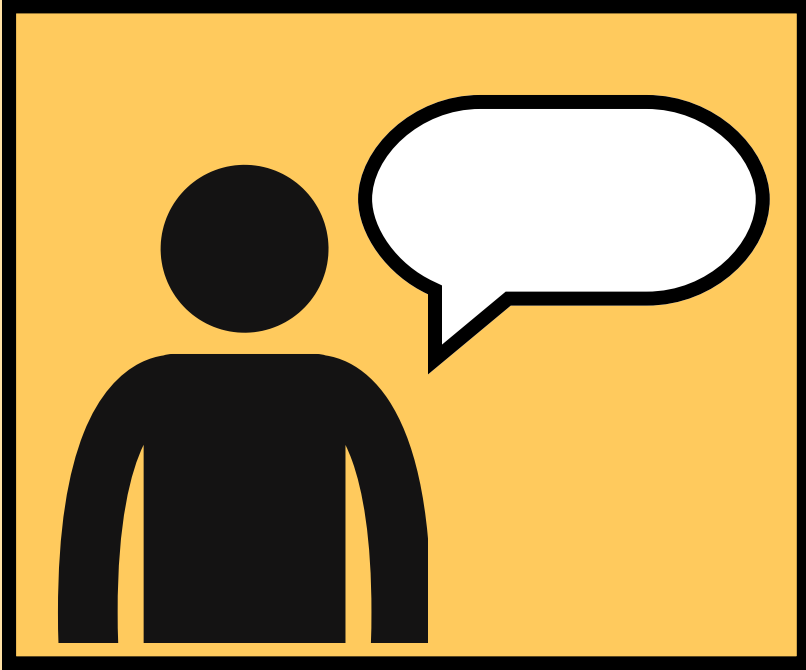
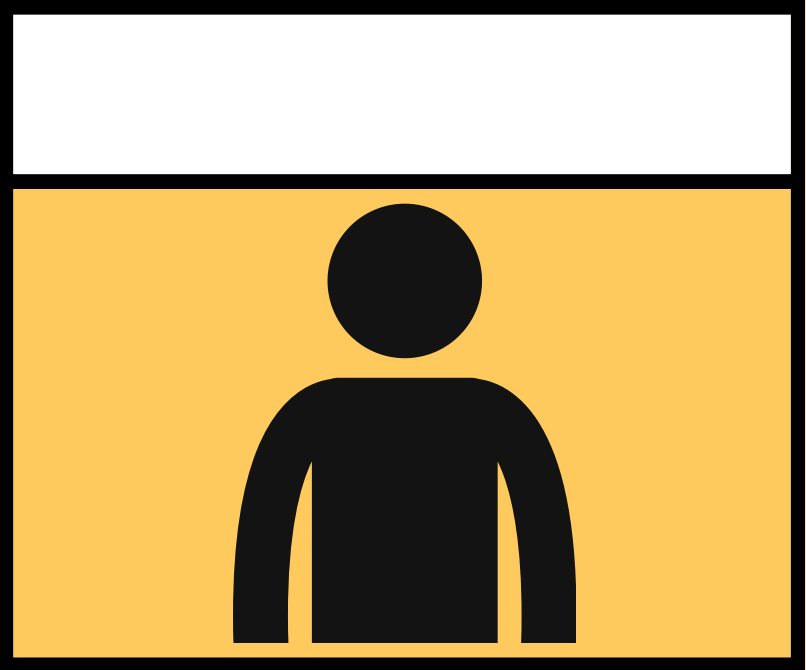
<https://ma.streetcheck.org/Collector>





# READING THE SCAN

The scans look like a heartbeat, they have lots of peaks and each peak is the machine recognizing something from the library. Sometimes it's on point, sometimes not so much. It gets a review from harm reduction staff and then checked by the MADDs team for final review.



# DRUGSDATA

With our project we submit the final scanned substance to Drugs Data (not all of them but most) and they are able to break the substance down into ratios...but do NOT identify the cut.





Street Check Sample Review

<https://www.info.streetcheck.org/submitted-samples>

# VERY HELPFUL LINKS



**WHAT'S THAT SUBSTANCE?**

**[VIMEO.COM/SHOWCASE/10532006](https://vimeo.com/showcase/10532006)**



**DRUGSDATA**

**[DRUGSDATA.ORG](https://www.drugsdata.org)**

**Remedy Alliance  
For The People**

**DRUG CHECKING TA FROM HARM REDUCTION WORKERS**

**[HTTPS://WWW.DRUGCHECKINGFTP.ORG/](https://www.drugcheckingftp.org/)**



**MADDS COMMUNITY DRUG CHECKING  
YOU CAN FIND SUBMITTED SAMPLE INFORMATION UNDER THE  
"TRENDS" TAB.**

**[HTTPS://WWW.INFO.STREETCHECK.ORG/GENERAL-8](https://www.info.streetcheck.org/general-8)**



**[DANCE SAFE WEBSITE](https://www.dancesafe.org/)**

**A REALIST REVIEW OF HOW COMMUNITY-BASED  
DRUG CHECKING SERVICES COULD BE  
DESIGNED AND IMPLEMENTED TO PROMOTE  
ENGAGEMENT OF PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS**

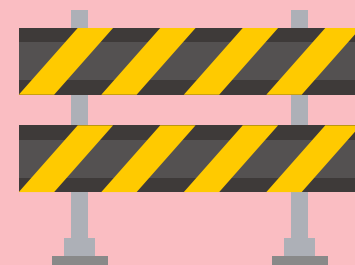
**[HTTPS://WWW.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV/PMC/ARTICLES/PMC9564958/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9564958/)**

**DRUG CHECKING SERVICES FOR  
PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS: A  
SYSTEMATIC REVIEW**

**[HTTPS://WWW.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV/PMC/ARTICLES/PMC9299873/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9299873/)**

# BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

- MONEY, drug checking machines are SUPER expensive.
- Not all machines work well.
- Accessing the drug libraries to be able to use certain machines.
- Space to test.
- Not having autonomy over programmatic decisions.
- Concerns with law enforcement interfering.
- FTS are still illegal in places, nevermind drug checking.
- MONEY
- Funds to pay for kits to test or submission to DrugsData



**HOW CAN WE GET AROUND THESE BARRIERS?**  
**HARM REDUCTION TA BY HARM REDUCTION FOLKS!**

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Remedy alliance for the people offers drug checking ta for free and they do a bunch of other cool stuff.

Drug Checking  
For The People

**DRUGCHECKINGFTP.ORG**





**HERE WE TRY TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY!**

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