

BEAR SPRAY ISN'T PROTECTION. IT'S A WEAPON.



What You Need to Know

Bear spray is designed only to stop an animal attack in the wilderness. When used on a person, it becomes a weapon — and using it is a criminal offence with serious, lasting consequences.

THE GROWING RISK IN OUR COMMUNITY

Bear spray-related incidents are rising rapidly in Hamilton:

- ▶ Bear spray occurrences have steadily **increased** every year from 2021-2025.
- ▶ A **115% increase** from the five-year low in 2021 to 2025.
- ▶ Incidents are most often committed by strangers, increasing the risk of unpredictable harm and escalation.
- ▶ The most common charge involving bear spray is Assault with a Weapon / Cause Bodily Harm.

BEAR SPRAY AND ROBBERY: A DANGEROUS TREND

2X Bear spray use in robberies has nearly **doubled** from 2024 to 2025

That represents a **483%** increase from the five-year low in 2022

What may seem like “protection” can quickly turn into a **serious criminal charge**.

YOUTH ARE MOST AFFECTED — AS OFFENDERS & VICTIMS

Bear spray misuse is not just a crime issue — it's a youth safety issue.

identified offenders:

63%
youth
aged
10-19



37%
adults
aged
20-69



victims:

42% are
youth aged
10-19

Bear spray harms victims as often as offenders — no one “wins.”

Using bear spray on a person can result in:



Arrest



Criminal charges



Court involvement



Permanent criminal record



Serious and lasting injury

One spray. One charge. One future changed.

Think Before You Spray

- ▶ Bear spray misuse can permanently change your future
 - ▶ Early support and better choices prevent criminal records and harm
 - ▶ Real safety comes from prevention, awareness, and support, not weapons
- Stop. Think. Choose Better.**

A Message for Parents & Caregivers

Bear spray can be easily ordered online through retailers such as Amazon or purchased at local hardware stores.

Parents & caregivers are encouraged to:

- ▶ Check online shopping accounts
- ▶ Talk to youth about the dangers and legal consequences
- ▶ Know what items are being purchased and brought into the home

Early conversations can prevent lifelong consequences.

Remember: Using bear spray on a person is not self-defence. It is a criminal offence with real and lasting impacts on everyone involved.

Need help?

Youth Support & Prevention Programs

Interval House of Hamilton

24/7 Crisis Line: 905-387-9959

Support for youth and families experiencing violence or crisis.

Good Shepherd Centres 905-528-9109

Youth services, housing support, and community programs.

YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford

905-531-5834

Youth programs, mentoring, leadership development.

YWCA Hamilton – Youth Programs

905-522-9922

Leadership development, empowerment programs, and safe spaces for youth.

Hamilton Child and Family Supports

905-522-1121

Counselling and support services for children, youth, and families.

Contact Hamilton 905-570-8888

Free intake and navigation for child and youth mental health services.

Mental Health & Crisis Support

COAST Hamilton 905-972-8338 (24/7)

Crisis support and mobile mental health response.

Barrett Centre for Crisis Support

905-529-7878

In-person and virtual crisis support.

Kids Help Phone

Call or text 1-800-668-6868

or text CONNECT to 686868

24/7 confidential support for youth across Canada.



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POLICE SERVICE**
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