

****If you are using an opioid, it is better to get substitution therapy (with Suboxone or Methadone) than to go into withdrawal by yourself because withdrawal usually leads to relapse.**

Withdrawal from Opioids

The opioids include Heroin, Morphine, OxyNEO (Oxycodone), Percodan (Oxycodone and ASA), Percocet (Oxycodone and Acetaminophen), Codeine, Methadone, Suboxone (Buprenorphine and Naloxone), Fentanyl, Demerol (Meperidine, Pethidine), and Dilaudid (Hydromorphone).

You may experience SOME of the listed symptoms of withdrawal. Remember that ALL THESE SYMPTOMS ARE TEMPORARY. If any persist or worsen, have them checked by your doctor in case they are related to another problem.

See an explanation of some of the symptoms on page 2.

ACUTE WITHDRAWAL (First Stage)

N.B. These are approximate times. Each individual may have symptoms for a shorter or longer period of time.

Heroin and Morphine: The symptoms appear 8 to 12 hours after the last dose, increase over the next 3 days and gradually disappear over 7 to 10 days.

Oxycodone and Hydromorphone: The withdrawal is similar to morphine but slightly less intense.

Methadone: The symptoms appear 24 to 48 hours after the last dose, increase over the next 3 to 6 days, and gradually disappear over 3 to 6 weeks.

Fentanyl patch: The symptoms appear 8 to 24 hours after the last patch, increase over the next several days and gradually disappear over 1 to 2 weeks.

Buprenorphine (the opioid in Suboxone): The symptoms appear 1-3 days after last dose, increase over the next 3-7 days after the last dose and may continue for 2 to 4 weeks.

Meperidine, Pethidine: The symptoms appear 3 hours after the last dose, increase over the next 8 to 12 hours and gradually disappear over 4 to 5 days.

Codeine: The withdrawal is similar to morphine, but much less intense.

The symptoms are listed by frequency, with the first ones occurring more often.

Physical Symptoms

- muscle, bone and joint pain, especially in the legs and lower back
- sweating, alternating with chills and waves of goose bumps
- loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps, diarrhoea
- restlessness, nervousness, weakness
- muscle spasms and kicking movements
- insomnia
- fever, headache, flu-like feeling
- rapid heart rate
- runny eyes, runny nose, sneezing, yawning

Psychological Symptoms

- anxiety
- obsession with getting the drug
- irritability

POST ACUTE WITHDRAWAL (Second Stage)

The symptoms can last for 2 to 6 months, gradually decreasing during the time.

Physical Symptoms

- insomnia
- weakness, tiredness
- poor appetite
- muscle aches

Psychological Symptoms

- unable to tolerate stress
- overly concerned about physical discomfort

DESCRIPTION OF SYMPTOMS (alphabetical order)

Anxiety: feeling that an unreal or imagined danger is about to happen, feelings of powerlessness accompanied by increased heart rate, increased breathing, sweating, trembling, weakness. Both excess caffeine and excess sugar can increase anxiety and insomnia.

Insomnia: can be any form of disturbed sleep, including nightmares.

Muscle spasms: uncontrolled movements of the muscles such as sudden movements of the large muscles of the arms or legs or small local muscle contractions such as eyelid muscle twitching; involuntary trembling or shaking.