

# Tapering Management from Benzos at Home

**Withdrawing sucks. You can take steps to make it suck less. Here are some tips that can help you manage withdrawals from benzo use as you taper. Remember that tapering is the absolute safest way to stop or change how you use benzos. Remember to be confident and be patient.**

## Disclaimers and tips:

- **DETOXING FROM BENZOS IS VERY DANGEROUS. QUITTING BENZOS COLD TURKEY CAN CAUSE SEIZURES AND OTHER HEALTH COMPLICATIONS.**
- Stopping benzos all at once can lead to seizures, psychotic reactions, and intense anxiety. Tapering (taking less over time) is recommended. It is HIGHLY recommended that you tell someone you trust that you are tapering off benzos. Tapering alone without medical supervision can be risky so letting someone you trust know can help keep you safe or get help in case of an emergency.
- If considering tapering with benzos, if possible, try to consult a healthcare professional because it can be very dangerous if the tapering is done too quickly.
- Detox from one drug at a time.
- Don't stop using other drugs if you already use them.

**Cold Turkey:** You can't go cold turkey when going off of benzos; doing so can cause seizures and can be life-threatening. This guide will be focused on what you can do to make tapering off of benzos more comfortable.

**Tapering:** Tapering is when you slowly reduce the amount of drugs taken over a few weeks until the dose is lowered to a smaller amount or nothing. If tapering is done correctly, it should minimize withdrawal symptoms. This can be difficult to do with an inconsistent supply of drugs that have cuts or adulterants. Because of this, it's easier and safer to taper using pharmaceutical drugs instead of street drugs. Tapering can be hard and going too fast can cause harsh withdrawal symptoms. For benzos,

tapering could look like lowering your dose by 5-10% per week or two. For more information about tapering benzos, check out the tapering schedules links.

## Tapering schedules

The Ashton Manual:

<https://www.benzo.org.uk/manual/bzsched.htm>

- Make your own <http://benzo.alwaysdata.net/>
- Complications: inconsistent/adulterated supply of drugs makes it difficult to know what you're getting and how much

**What to expect from withdrawals:** The only way one should detox from heavy or long-term benzo use is through tapering. Withdrawal symptoms will usually be felt after moving to a lower dose, but this highly depends on the type of benzo and how long and how much you've been using, it can vary. The intensity of symptoms is higher the faster you lower your dose and the intensity of symptoms is lower the slower you lower your dose. Common symptoms include anxiety, restlessness, muscle spasms, nausea, difficulty concentrating, cravings, and insomnia; the intensity of these depends on how much and how long you've been using.

## The essentials for detoxing at home:



- Lots of water and sleep
- Light, bland meals (soup, crackers, banana), especially if your stomach aches
- Exercise (anything from a light walk to intense swimming)
- Fiber (helps with diarrhea and general nutrient absorption)
- This isn't essential or possible for everyone, but

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whenever possible, a support system or supportive environment can be very helpful when tapering

## Common Symptoms and Recommended Supplements/OTC medications

Withdrawal symptoms are both physical and mental; some symptoms aren't easily addressed with these suggestions and results may vary. **Remember to always read the label, follow the instructions, and make sure it doesn't negatively interact with something else you're taking, especially prescription medications.**

### Diarrhea

- Loperamide (brand name: Imodium)
- Bismuth subsalicylate (brand name: Pepto-Bismol)

### Heartburn/indigestion

- Antacids/acid-reducers; there are many types, some examples are calcium carbonate (brand name: Alka-Seltzer, Tums), magnesium hydroxide (brand name: Milk of Magnesia), omeprazole (brand name: Prilosec), and cimetidine (brand name: Tagamet)

### Fatigue

- N-acetyl L-tyrosine (supplement)
- Rhodiola rosea (herbal supplement)

### Muscle Cramps/Aches

- Magnesium (supplement); there are many types, magnesium glycinate or magnesium gluconate are the best forms to use for cost and lowest rates of GI-upset/stomach aches. Avoid magnesium oxide, chloride, or citrate as GI issues are more common with these forms
- Potassium (supplement and food); an easy way to consume potassium is through foods like bananas and potatoes

### Pain Relief/Headaches

- Ibuprofen (brand name: Advil); be careful if you have blood or kidney issues
- Naproxen (brand name: Aleve); be careful if you have blood or kidney issues
- Acetaminophen (brand name: Tylenol); be careful if you have liver problems

### Vomiting/Nausea

- Ginger root (supplement and food) ; any easy way to consume ginger is by eating it or making a tea
- Dimenhydrinate (brand name: Dramamine)

### Insomnia

- Diphenhydramine (brand name: Benadryl); be careful if you have restless leg syndrome
- Doxylamine (brand name: Unisom); be careful if you have restless leg syndrome
- Chamomile tea or extract (herbal supplement); may help with stomach and shakes
- Passionflower tea or extract (herbal supplement); may help with stomach and shakes
- Valerian root tea or extract (herbal supplement)
- Lemon balm tea or extract (herbal supplement)

### Anxiety/Stress

- Ashwagandha (supplement)
- L-theanine (supplement); this is also found in green tea

### General benzo withdrawal symptom reduction:



- Cannabis/CBD/THC; may reduce benzo withdrawal symptoms and nausea. May increase appetite. **Cannabis affects everyone differently and it's not recommended for tapering if you don't typically use cannabis**
- Multivitamin (supplement); helps your body detox more effectively

### Note about OTC drugs/medications and supplements:

These supplements and over the counter (OTC) medications may help reduce withdrawal symptoms while it's going through tapering. They can also help refuel your body while tapering. With diarrhea, vomiting, and sweating, you are more likely to be dehydrated and lose a lot of key vitamins and minerals.

### Where can I find these OTC medications and supplements?

Many of these can be found at your local grocery store or pharmacy. If you can't find it in person, online may be a good option for you. If there is a dollar store in your area, you may be able to find many of these at a low price, especially over the counter medications.



**Tea and soup are your friend!** Not only are you getting some liquids into your body but it can help deal with symptoms. Chamomile,

Passionflower, and ginger tea are easy to find options for managing nausea, indigestion, and relaxation. It can also be comforting to hold something warm.

**Comfort support:** It may not always be possible to taper in the ideal setting but some of these may support you through withdrawal by helping you feel more comfortable. At least as comfortable as you can get while tapering.

- Hot baths or shower with epsom salts (if possible) can help with aches
- Heating pads can help with pain and overall mental comfort
- Limiting/stopping caffeine intake can reduce trembles/shakes and anxiety but it might make you sleepy if you're used to having caffeine regularly
- Rest! Try to get as much rest and sleep as possible. Fresh sheets help.
- A change of clothes can do wonders if you're drenched in sweat
- Breathing exercises and meditation.
  - There are great and free apps for this as well as many free videos online
- Someone you trust to keep you company
- A notepad to write down your thoughts as you go through this

### Meal Options

Eating may be the last thing on your mind but light, bland meals can help your body recover

- Soup-like broths are the easiest option and provide additional nutrients
  - When possible, eating nutritious light meals with lean meat (ex: chicken or fish) and fiber from veggies or beans may help with digestive issues
- Bananas and crackers are good but don't force yourself if chewing feels near impossible.
- Meal replacement drinks may be harder to find and expensive but can be used as well
- Having some food in your stomach can help lower the chance of vomiting stomach juices which can be more painful and uncomfortable because of the acidic content



**In case you need to call 911:** tell the dispatcher the actual symptoms that are happening (seizures, heart attack, etc) then provide more information once the EMTs arrive. Hopefully, this can avoid police wanting to show up. We know that EMTs and healthcare workers can be stigmatizing to PWUD but it may be important to know where the closest hospital is.

**It's okay if you use again.** Don't be hard on yourself if you find yourself using again after tapering. You are not a failure. There are many reasons why we stop or start using drugs and they are ALL valid. If you find

yourself using like you did before, be kind to yourself.

Being kind to yourself can look like anything from:

- eating meals that make you feel good
- chatting with someone you trust
- writing down your thoughts on why you do or don't want to try again.

Being kind to yourself also means that you don't have to stop using one day to the next and managing your doses just enough so you can take care of your pets or kids, keep going to work, and anything else to do to survive and thrive.

You are worthy and valuable, even if sometimes the world makes you feel like you aren't. Sometimes, we aren't always ready or it's not the right time because of other things going on in our lives to change our relationship with a drug and that's okay.

### Some things to remember if you use again:

- **Tolerance!** Your body won't react the same to your usual dose after not using, even after a few days. The drug will feel much stronger, especially after withdrawal/detox. A low tolerance can increase your risk of overdose (respiratory depression) or unwanted black outs.
- **Tell a friend** or have someone near that knows **you haven't used in a while.**
- Go slow and always have naloxone on hand.
- **YOU ARE LOVED!**

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