

Withdrawal Management from Opioids at Home

Withdrawing sucks. You can take steps to make it suck less. Here are some tips that can help you manage withdrawals from opioid use as you taper them or go cold-turkey. This guide is focused on managing withdrawal symptoms while you're detoxing. Remember to be confident, be patient, choose the method that works for you.

Disclaimers and tips:

- Detox from one drug at a time.
- Don't stop using other drugs if you already use them.
- Always read labels carefully and make sure it doesn't negatively interact with a health condition or other supplements/drugs you might be taking.

Cold turkey: Going cold turkey is when you suddenly stop using opioids and start getting withdrawal symptoms. The intensity of withdrawal symptoms from going cold turkey depends mostly on what opioid you've used for, how long, and how much. If going cold turkey, the withdrawal symptoms will always be much stronger compared with tapering.

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 and because of this it's often easier to taper using pharmaceutical drugs instead of street drugs. Tapering can be hard and going too fast can cause harsh withdrawal symptoms. For opioids, tapering could look like lowering your dose by 5-20% per week or two.

Tapering vs Cold Turkey: Choosing between tapering and cold turkey is a matter of how you want to detox. If you want a longer and less intense withdrawal, go with tapering. If you want a shorter and more intense withdrawal, go with cold turkey. Tapering your opioid use can be tricky but it isn't life-threatening and going cold turkey is quicker but it leaves some bedridden for a few days.

Opioid replacement drugs and tapering: There are medications available for opioid tapering,

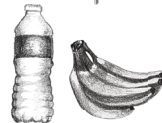
or replacement. When prescribed for opioid replacement or tapering, common drugs are buprenorphine, methadone, and naltrexone. Tapering can also be done with these or other opioid medications under the supervision of medical providers but it's often very expensive and hard to access. This guide won't be focused on those options but it can be used in combination with tapering using opioid medications at home.

What to expect from withdrawals: When going cold turkey, withdrawal symptoms are usually felt after about a day of not using and are usually at their worst around the second and third day but this highly depends on the type of opioid, and how long and how much you've been using, it can vary.

- *Common symptoms* include anxiety, cravings, chills, sweating, muscle soreness, fatigue, insomnia, goosebumps, changes in appetite, irritability, dysphoria, restlessness, cramps, diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting.

Withdrawal symptoms usually get less intense after 3 or so days but it could take up to two to three weeks for the physical symptoms to go away. Mental symptoms like cravings may stick around for much longer. As far as tapering, you can expect similar symptoms but at a lesser degree depending on how slow you taper off.

The essentials for detoxing at home:



- Lots of water and sleep
- Light, bland meals (soup, crackers, banana), especially if your stomach aches
- Light Exercise like going for a walk (if you feel up to it and may be easier after a few days)
- Fiber (helps with diarrhea and general nutrient absorption)
- This isn't necessary essential, but whenever

This resource is a living document that we will continue to update and refine. If you have input about how the information contained here could be improved or if you have new content to add, please email us at content@nextdistro.org.

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

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 drugs or 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 opioid withdrawal symptom reduction

- Kratom (herbal supplement); reduces withdrawal symptoms but is also a weak opioid so it can also cause withdrawal symptoms in very high doses



- Cannabis/CBD/THC; may reduce opioid withdrawal symptoms and nausea. May increase appetite. **Cannabis affects everyone differently and it's not recommended for detoxing if you don't typically use cannabis**

- NAC (supplement); reduces brain stress tied to opioid withdrawal and may reduce cravings
- DXM (brand name: Robitussin); may reduce opioid withdrawal symptoms, may reduce pain, and may increase nausea. make sure you're buying DXM only products, taking 60-75mg every 4-6 hours when in withdrawal; be careful because it has intoxicating effects in higher doses
- Black seed oil or Nigella Sativa Extract (supplement) - may reduce opioid withdrawal symptoms and may help with runny nose and energy levels
- Multivitamin (supplement); may help your body detox more effectively

Note about OTC drugs/medications and supplements:

These supplements and OTC medications can help reduce withdrawal symptoms while you're going through detox. They can also help refuel your body while it's detoxing. 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 the OTC 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 detox/withdraw in the ideal setting but some of these can really help with getting you through withdrawal. Overall, these can help make you feel more comfortable. At least as comfortable as you can get while detoxing.

- 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 on smartphones.
- 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
- 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. Dehydration can be dangerous, especially if you have other conditions, so knowing your closest hospital is good information in case there is an emergency.

It's okay if you use again. Don't be hard on yourself if you find yourself using again after doing a home detox or tapering down. 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 again, be kind to yourself.

Being kind to yourself can look like anything from:

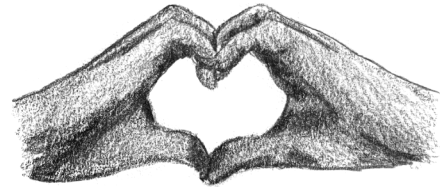
- eating take-out meals,
- chatting with someone you trust, or
- writing down your thoughts on why you do or don't want to try again.

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 you have to do to survive.

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).
- **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!**



This resource is a living document that we will continue to update and refine. If you have input about how the information contained here could be improved or if you have new content to add, please email us at content@nextdistro.org.

For information & resources, visit:

www.nextdistro.org/resources

www.nextdistro.org

SMS/Signal 646-389-0752

Reddit /u/nextdistro

Email info@nextdistro.org