

Withdrawal Management from Stimulants at Home

Withdrawing sucks. You can take steps to make it suck less. Here are some tips that can help you manage withdrawals from stimulant use as you taper them or go cold-turkey. 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 stimulants and start getting withdrawal symptoms. The intensity of withdrawal symptoms from going cold turkey depends mostly on what stimulant 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 easier to taper using pharmaceutical drugs instead of street drugs. Tapering can be hard and going too fast can cause harsh withdrawal symptoms. For stimulants, 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 change your use. 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 stimulant use can be tricky but it isn't life-threatening and

going cold turkey can be quick but it leaves some bedridden for a few days.

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

- *Common symptoms* irritability, cravings, anxiety, hunger, sleepiness, fatigue, sadness, aggressiveness, increased sleepiness, and low desire to do things you would normally enjoy.

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. *Above all else, stimulant withdrawals can make you very tired and depressed for up to a few weeks.* 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
- Exercise (anything from a light walk to intense swimming)
- Fiber (helps with diarrhea and general nutrient absorption)
- This isn't necessary essential, but whenever possible, a support system or supportive environment can be very helpful when changing your use

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.

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.

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

Delusions/mania/psychosis (after long term heavy use with little to no sleep)

- Benzodiazepines (Xanax, Diazepam, etc) can help manage
 - Street drugs are often cut. Fentanyl and extremely potent analogues are more common than ever. Use with caution (test, go slow, have narcan)
- If you don't have access to benzodiazepines, calling 911 may be the best option in severe or emergency situations

General opioid withdrawal symptom reduction



- 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
- 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.

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.

- Rest! Try to get as much rest as possible
 - Fatigue and low energy are the most common & long lasting effects of withdrawal so take a moment to nap, sit, and rest when you can.
- Eating & Staying Hydrated
 - Keeping up with yummy meals and lots of water can help with avoid worsening the severity of symptoms as you go through the motions
- Limiting caffeine intake
 - If you need to keep up with certain responsibilities but be aware that it may increase symptoms of anxiety and restlessness
- Movement and Exercise (anything from a walk to dancing to lifting weights)
 - Movement gives some more energy and can help with aches, general body discomfort, or if you're feeling restless.
- Warm showers: good for aches and could help with sleep if restless
- Breathing exercises and meditation.
 - There are great and free apps for this as well as many youtube videos online
- Breathing exercises and Meditation
- Someone you trust to keep you company
- A notepad to write down your thoughts as you go through this



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 but it may be important to know where the closest hospital is in case of 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 changing your use. 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 how you did before, 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!**

For more drug-specific information & resources, visit:

www.nextdistro.org/resources

www.nextdistro.org

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