

Opioid Withdrawal

For opioid withdrawal adult patients only.

History

- Recent opioid drug use
- Chronic opioid drug use
- Narcotic prescriptions in the household or on person
- Evidence of illicit drug use (e.g., needles, paraphernalia)
- Chronic medical conditions requiring opioid medication
- Overdose reversal with naloxone

Signs and Symptoms

- Tachycardia
- Gastrointestinal distress
- Hot/cold flashes
- Poor concentration
- Diaphoresis
- Rhinorrhea
- Restlessness
- Piloerection
- Yawning

Differential

- Diabetic emergency
- Neurological disorder
- Traumatic injury
- Alcohol withdrawal
- Benzodiazapine withdrawal

Opioid Withdrawal Objective Signs

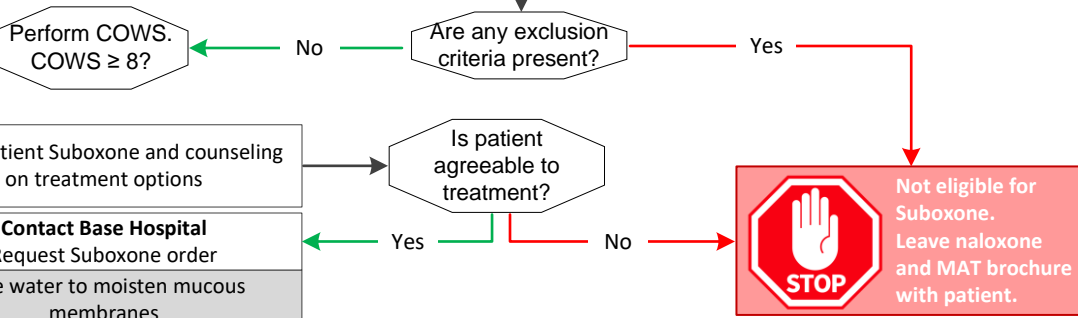
Patient must present with ≥ 2 objective sign to be eligible for Suboxone treatment.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yawning • Rhinorrhea or lacrimation • Dilated pupils • Tachycardia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diaphoresis • Restlessness and/or agitation • Vomiting, diarrhea • Piloerection |
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Exclusion Criteria

Patient is not a candidate for Suboxone treatment if any of the following are present.

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|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No opioid withdrawal signs or symptoms • Under 16 years of age • Any methadone use within last 10 days | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe medical illness (sepsis, respiratory distress, etc.) • Altered mental status and unable to give consent or comprehend potential risks and benefits for any reason |
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P	Offer patient Suboxone and counseling on treatment options
P	Contact Base Hospital Request Suboxone order
	Give water to moisten mucous membranes
	WITH APPROVAL, give Suboxone
	Perform repeat COWS after 10 minutes
	For persistent or worsening symptoms, repeat Suboxone
P	Perform repeat COWS after 10 minutes
	Provide naloxone and MAT brochure

Notify receiving facility.
Consider Base Hospital for medical direction

Pearls

- Treatment must be authorized by the Base Hospital prior to administration.
- Ensure Suboxone dosage is included in patient transfer at hospital. This information must be included so the patient can begin the process of being enrolled in Medication Assisted Therapy (MAT) and documented in the EHR.



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Clinical Opioid Withdrawal Scale (COWS)

ANXIETY OR IRRITABILITY

Visually observed during assessment

- 0 None
- 1 Reports increasing irritability or anxiousness
- 2 Visually irritable or anxious
- 4 Too irritable to participate or affecting participation

RESTING HEART RATE

Measured after sitting for one (1) minute

- 0 ≤ 80 bpm
- 1 81-100 bpm
- 2 101-120 bpm
- 4 > 120 bpm

BONE OR JOINT ACHEs

Only new pain attributed to withdrawal is scored

- 0 Not present
- 1 Mild, diffuse discomfort
- 2 Reports severe, diffuse aching if joints/muscles
- 4 Patient rubbing joints/muscles and unable to be still

RESTLESSNESS

Visually observed during assessment

- 0 Able to be still
- 1 Report difficulty being still, but able to do so
- 3 Frequent shifting or extraneous movement of legs/arms
- 5 $>$ Unable to be still for more than a few seconds

GOOSEFLESH SKIN

Visually or physically observed during assessment

- 0 Skin is smooth
- 3 Piloerection of skin can be felt or arm hairs standing up
- 5 Prominent piloerection

TREMOR

Observation of outstretched hands

- 0 No tremors
- 1 Tremor can be felt but not observed
- 2 Slight tremor observed
- 4 Gross tremor or muscle twitching

GASTROINTESTINAL UPSET

Within past 30 minutes

- 0 No GI symptoms
- 1 Stomach cramps
- 2 Nausea or loose stool
- 3 Vomiting or diarrhea
- 5 Multiple episodes of diarrhea or vomiting

SWEATING

Over past 30 minutes – not environmental or from activity

- 0 No reports of chills or flushing
- 1 Subjective report of chills or flushing
- 2 Flushed or observable moistness to face
- 3 Beads of sweat on brow or face
- 4 Sweat streaming off face

PUPIL SIZE

Visually observed during assessment

- 0 Pupils pinned or normal size for ambient light
- 1 Pupils possibly larger than normal for ambient light
- 2 Pupils moderately dilated
- 5 Pupils very dilated

YAWNING

Visually observed during assessment

- 0 No yawning
- 1 Yawning once or twice during assessment
- 2 Yawning three or more times during assessment
- 4 Yawning several times/minute

RUNNY NOSE OR TEARING

Not accounted for by cold symptoms or allergies

- 0 Not present
- 1 Nasal stuffiness or unusually moist eyes
- 2 Runny nose or eyes tearing
- 4 Nose constantly running or tears streaming down face

TOTAL COWS SCORING

- 5-12 Mild withdrawal
- 13-24 Moderate withdrawal
- 25-36 Moderately severe withdrawal
- > 36 Severe withdrawal

