

Self-care symptomatic relief when stopping Opiate Substitute Medication (OST)

What will I feel like if I want to stop or can no longer take opiate medication?

Please note that where medication names are provided, if they are not readily available please discuss with the pharmacist who will usually be able to suggest an equivalent alternative.

Symptoms you may experience include:

- Nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea
- Feeling anxious
- Not being able to sleep
- Hot and cold flushes
- Sweating
- Stomach cramps
- Muscle/bone pain
- Watery discharge from eyes and nose

Let's run through each symptom and see what can be done to alleviate these symptoms by either buying over the counter medicines from your local pharmacy, or self-managing your symptoms.

Nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea:

1. For adults & children aged 16 years or older - over the counter Antacids may provide some relief.
2. Dioralyte Sachets: The contents of each sachet should be dissolved in 200ml (approx. 7fl oz) of drinking water. Use fresh drinking water for adults. Take 3-4 daily for rehydration.
3. Drink plenty of water to keep hydrated. Sip water throughout the day and drink 2 litres plus of water per day.
4. Avoid fatty and spicy foods and citrus fruits. Eat bland food such as rice, dried toast etc.
5. If symptoms persist for more than 48 hours, or if there is any blood in the stools, contact your GP immediately.

Feeling anxious

1. Take slow deep breaths.
2. Regular exercise and eat a healthy diet of fruit and vegetables.
3. Self-meditation to help relax.
4. Have a warm soothing bath.
5. If symptoms are persistent and worsening, consider booking an appointment with your Doctor.

Not being able to sleep

1. Use sleep hygiene measures such as no napping during the day, having a warm bath before going to bed, no caffeine-based drinks after 5pm and doing regular exercise. Read books, which are not violent or thought provoking. Do not look at your mobile phone or other screens before going to bed.
1. Purchase either Promethazine 25mg (Phenergan) or Nytol (Diphenhydramine) 25mg and take one or two at night for 2-3 nights to get back into a sleep cycle but do not take regularly otherwise your body will get use to them.
2. Discuss with a pharmacist if any other product such as herbal remedies might help improve your sleep patterns.

Hot and cold flushes and sweating:

1. Take Paracetamol 500mg 1-2 tablets every 4-6 hourly but maximum dose of four times a day and no more than 8 in 24 hrs or Ibuprofen 400mg one three times a day with or after food.
2. Keep hydrated. Aim to drink 2 litres plus of water per day.

Stomach cramps:

1. Keep hydrated and take Dioralyte, or over the counter antacid, to settle stomach down.
2. Buscopan 10mg tablets and take two tablets four times a day when required.
3. For pain relief you can take Paracetamol 500mg 1-2 tablets every 4-6 hourly when required and maximum of 8 in 24 hrs or Ibuprofen 400mg three times a day with or after food.

Muscle cramps/bone pain

1. For pain relief you can take Paracetamol 500mg 1-2 tablets every 4-6 hourly when required and maximum of 8 in 24 hrs or Ibuprofen 400mg three times a day with or after food.

Watery discharge from eyes and nose:

1. Purchase an antihistamine, either Loratadine 10mg tablets or Cetirizine 10mg tablets and take one daily, which may help dry nasal secretions and stop watering of the eyes.
2. Another antihistamine Chlorphenamine 4mg tablet can be taken every 4 hourly but Maximum of 6 tablets in 24 hours. Please note that this medication may cause drowsiness.
3. Boiled and then cooled water to bathe the eyes with.

If unsure or you need any further advice or information contact your local Pharmacist or Doctor.