



Guidelines for Home Detoxification from Opiates and Methadone

Local groups and contact phone numbers

NA UK 24 hour Helpline	0845 3733366
Frank Drugs Helpline	0800 776600
NHS Direct	0845 4647
Service User Support Team	01452 543546

Independence Trust (formerly GDAS)

Gloucester	01452 876440
Cheltenham	01242 584881
Stroud	01453 755711
Forest of Dean	01594 825656
CIS	01452 553599

Aftercare for supporters

We believe that the process of stopping drugs is not only difficult for the patient but also for their close relatives and friends. CSSMS staff can provide short-term "Couples Work". Help is also available from:

Families Anonymous	0845 1200660
Footprints	01452 539595
Parents Against Drug Abuse	0845 7023867
Gloucestershire PCT	01242 548800

Countywide Specialist Substance Misuse Service

West Gloucestershire Team	01452 891260
East Gloucestershire Team	01242 845614
Criminal Justice Drugs Team	01452 545779
Branchlea Cross	01242 845600

Primary Care Substance Misuse Service

Countywide Team	01452 523151
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Naltrexone

Everyone who is detoxing should think about going on Naltrexone afterwards. It is available in tablet form and you take it on a daily basis. It blocks your body's Opiate receptors for three days after taking Naltrexone. If you do use on top there will be no effect, or you may experience withdrawal symptoms.

If you try to override the Naltrexone by taking bigger doses you will overdose (OD) before you experience any pleasure, and also Naloxone (the usual medication given by Doctors to treat overdose) will not work.

Please remember that once you have detoxified from Opiate and/or Methadone, your tolerance to these drugs (the amount your body can cope with) is reduced to that of someone who has not been addicted. Therefore, if you do relapse or use Opiates, lower the amount you take or you will overdose.

In case of emergency call the GP

Important

After detoxification

Detoxification is the first step in stopping drugs. You will also need follow-on help and support to maintain abstinence and develop a rewarding and enjoyable drug-free life.

Sometimes people find it helpful to attend residential or day rehabilitation. If you would like to explore this further please ask your Care Coordinator about meeting with the Social Worker to discuss this.

What is home, or community, detox?

Community drug detoxification helps people who are addicted to Opiate drugs to successfully get off them without going into hospital.

During the community detoxification, patients will be seen at home or in the community clinics for the first 3 days by a professional Health Care Worker. From day 4 onwards, the frequency of visits will depend on how the patient is progressing and how everyone is coping with the detoxification.

The Health Care Worker(s) will monitor withdrawal symptoms, offer support and will talk to your General Practitioner (GP) or the CSSMS team doctor about the detoxification medication and your progress.

What are Opiate withdrawal symptoms?

Physical withdrawal symptoms from Opiates are often described as 'like a bad dose of flu'. These physical symptoms are accompanied by psychological symptoms such as dysphoria (sadness), and you may find that you are very emotional in the first few weeks after detox. There are several reasons for this. One possibility is that the level of the brain chemical Dopamine may be low because of your drug use (it will return to normal after a few weeks).

Another is that the drugs enabled you to blot out sad or unhappy events in your life, and coming off drugs brings the feelings flowing back because you have not dealt with them emotionally.

These emotional symptoms will be helped by counselling and support, you don't have to suffer in silence! Occasionally antidepressant medication is necessary.

What medication is used?

- Rather than detoxifying straight away from Heroin, patients are normally stabilised on Methadone or Subutex/Suboxone first and then detoxify when they are ready to come off Opioids. Some people will go on Methadone first and then transfer over to Subutex/Suboxone.
- Subutex/Suboxone detoxification is usually achieved by reducing the dose gradually over 12 to 36 days. People doing this type of detox often don't need much in the way of detox medication except a short course of sleeping tablets.
- For a Methadone detoxification the Methadone is usually reduced gradually over a few weeks and then dose stopped at 25-30mgs/mls daily and the following medication is used to treat the withdrawal symptoms:

Detoxification medication

- Lofexidine acts by blocking the chemical Noradrenaline which is responsible for most of the withdrawal symptoms. It can lower blood pressure, so we will monitor your blood pressure in the first few days after starting it. Some people will also need to have an ECG (heart trace check) before going on Lofexidine.
- Diclofenac/Brufen/Naproxen are anti-inflammatory drugs similar to aspirin. They are useful for muscular back and joint pain. They are not addictive. They can irritate the stomach lining, so should be taken with food or milk. They should not be used in pregnancy, Paracetamol should be used instead.
- Buscopan is an anti-diarrhoea drug which will also reduce stomach cramps.

Sleep problems

If sleep is a problem please try some of the methods suggested in the "Sleep Handout" and remember, it will get better.

Sedatives such as Zopiclone, Zolpidem, or Benzodiazepines (Nitrazepam, Lometazepam or Lorazepam) may be used to restore your sleep pattern. They should not be taken continually for more than three weeks due to the risk of becoming addicted to them.

Diet and fluid intake during detoxification

If possible take small, regular meals but do not worry if food cannot be tolerated within the first three days. It is important not to force people undergoing detoxification to eat, but it is important to drink plenty of fluids, avoiding caffeine which can increase anxiety and will make your sleep worse.

Environment

When people detoxify from drugs their nervous system is over-excited. This may cause them to be oversensitive to light and noise and make them feel anxious and irritable. It is important to keep the surroundings calm and quiet whenever possible.

When do people start to feel better?

Opiate withdrawal symptoms from Methadone peak at day five in the standard Lofexidine detoxification, and can occur two to three days after stopping Subutex/Suboxone.

Most acute symptoms are significantly improved by the second week of detox. Sleep problems can last for several weeks after stopping Opiate/Opioid medication, and short term low mood can also occur. For these reasons it is important to maintain contact with your Care Co-ordinator, and to receive support and information on relapse prevention in the weeks immediately after detox.