



WITHDRAWAL

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Withdrawal symptoms occur when a person stops or reduces their consumption of substances after using regularly for a long time or after using high doses. If someone suddenly stops taking substances, such as opioids, they can experience withdrawal symptoms.

Alcohol withdrawal without medical supervision can be very dangerous and even cause death.

SYMPTOMS	
Headaches	Intense desire to use the substance
Nervousness, anxiety or agitation (sweating, elevated heart rate)	Trouble sleeping
Irritability	Fatigue, greater need to sleep, loss of energy
Nausea or vomiting	

The severity and duration of withdrawal depends on which substance was used, in what doses it was taken and how long it was abused.

RESOURCES

If you experience any of these symptoms after stopping or reducing your consumption, contact your doctor or nurse at your health centre.

ADVICE FOR RELIEVING WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

- Take a hot bath
- Record your emotions, strengths and weaknesses in a journal every day
- Make an offering of tobacco
- Listen to relaxing music
- Drink plenty of water
- Take slow, deep breaths
- Exercise
- Go outside
- Meditate or do yoga
- Breathe deeply and remember that you are in control of your thoughts

¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-use/about-problematic-substance-use.html>



RELAPSE

RELAPSE²

Despite your best efforts, you've started using again. Do you consider it a failure and feel guilty because of it?

Remember that relapse isn't a failure; it's a part of the recovery process.

- Look at relapse as just another step in your recovery process rather than a definitive failure.
- It means that staying abstinent is harder than you thought.
- The fact that you successfully stopped using for a limited period of time proves that you are capable of quitting.
- It's important to regain control over your substance use as soon as possible.
- The sooner you act, the less space substances will take up in your life and the easier it will be to quit. Addiction helplines can support you through it.
- It's also important to identify the situation that is putting you at risk. Voluntary isolation and ads on social media encouraging consumption can impact your motivation to quit.
- Staying busy with activities you enjoy and keeping in touch with friends and family remotely will reduce the chances that you will start using again.

Remember: A relapse isn't proof that you're incapable of quitting; it's an opportunity to come out stronger.

Over time, your need to use drugs will lessen, and your risk of relapsing, although always present, will be reduced.

If you resume taking opioids: Take extra precautions to avoid an overdose

After a period of abstinence from opioids, there is an increased risk of overdose due to lowered tolerance. When resuming opioid use, you should limit the amount you consume, have a naloxone kit on hand if possible and call 911 at the first signs of an overdose. It is also important to never use alone. In light of the current situation, it is recommended to use in the presence of someone who is at least two metres away—or who is on Facetime or Skype with you—so they can call 911 in case of an overdose.

RESOURCES

The Government of Canada has videos on its website that demonstrate how to administer naloxone (nasal spray and injectable).

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-use/problematic-prescription-drug-use/opioids/naloxone.html>

² <https://www.drogues-info-service.fr/Les-drogues-et-vous/L-arret/J-ai-recommence-a-consommer#.XnkKUqhKhyx> (French only)