

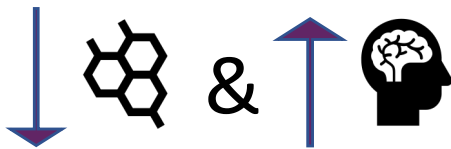
Withdrawal and the Cycle of Opioid Use



For those taking short-acting opioids, like heroine, withdrawal symptoms set in about 6 to 12 hours after their last use. For those taking long-acting opioids like methadone or buprenorphine, withdrawal symptoms set in about 1 day to 30 hours after their last dose.



You begin to feel agitated, anxious, your muscles ache and spasm, you're yawning but you can't sleep, and you sweat with goosebumps like your body's forgotten how to work. Then abdominal cramping, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and tremors. I may be up two years of mood-swings, cravings, drug dreams, anxiety, depression, irritability, agitation, insomnia, poor concentration, and a daily war to avoid triggers. Without proper medication, it is very likely that every day, all day your brain will tell you to go use.



A person who withdraws without any medication to help address their cravings now faces the world right at the point that two major risk factors have converged. The withdrawal and lack of opioids has lowered their tolerance and the lack of medication has increased their craving for more opioids.

And where might a person withdraw from opioids without any medication to help address cravings? In our prisons and jails. In North Carolina found recently incarcerated people are almost 42 times more likely to die from an overdose in the two weeks following release than the general In Washington State prisons individuals were 129 times at greater risk of dying from opioid overdose than the general population and this was most acute in the two weeks following release.

129 x greater risk of fatal overdose
for those leaving prison in WA

42 x greater risk of fatal overdose
for those leaving prison and jail in NC

TAKE-AWAYS

"The science of the matter is unequivocal: Addiction is a chronic and treatable medical condition, not a weakness of will or character or a form of social deviance. But stigma and longstanding prejudices—even within healthcare—lead decision-makers across healthcare, criminal justice, and other systems to *punish* people who use drugs rather than treat them." and "Compassion, care, and support need to extend to those still using drugs and those who return to drug use, not just to those who can satisfy the stringent standards of abstinence." – Dr. Nora Volkow, *Drug Overdose Deaths in 2020 Were Horrifying*, Scientific American, August 31, 2021

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