

Opioid Withdrawal

When a person who has become dependent on opioids stops taking them, they experience symptoms of withdrawal. Those intense symptoms can show up just hours after a last dose. They include nausea, body aches, diarrhea, cold sweats, shakes, insomnia, depression and anxiety.

"It's one of the incredibly most painful, un-fun experiences that anybody will ever go through."-Jake, Patient

Jake Jansen is a recovering opioid addict. His addiction started with prescription pills and eventually shifted to heroin. When a person stops taking opioids, the results can be very painful.

"Because these things reduce the sensation of pain, the withdrawal is everything seems painful. So, your baseline pain can get worse."-Dr. Michael Miller, Addiction Medicine Physician

"I was constantly cold, cold sweats. You would get nauseous, vomiting, diarrhea. I couldn't eat for days."-Katie, Patient

Katie Schneider experienced the painful withdrawal symptoms during recovery from her opioid addiction. The symptoms she experienced are a direct result of what opioids do to a person's brain. Opioids affect regular daily functions like breathing and alertness.

"When you remove it, then suddenly that brain region is going at full capacity, much higher than it would normally be activated and that can lead to a lot of your kind of physical withdrawal symptoms."- Matthew Hearing, Ph.D., Asst. Professor, Biomedical Science

"When you do opiates it's one of the most pleasurable experiences you'll ever experience followed by one of the worst experiences you've ever experienced that physical detox."-Jake, Patient

While physically and emotionally painful, a medically-managed withdrawal is not life threatening. How long the symptoms last depends on how much and how often a person is using.

"The most dangerous thing you can do to someone who has been on opioids or been using it for prescription use is abruptly stop it."- Matthew Hearing, Ph.D., Asst. Professor, Biomedical Science

"You get those thought processes. I can't deal with this anymore. It's those physical withdrawal symptoms that really keep people using."-Jake, Patient

"Talk to somebody you're close to and say hey, I need help. I need somebody to help me get through it."-Katie, Patient

Opioid Withdrawal

The physical symptoms of withdrawal can be too much for a person to handle on their own, so it's very important to have a healthcare professional monitor your progress.

"We help people through therapies like cognitive behavioral therapies to understand what are the triggers that may make you think of using or will put it on your mind or will increase your hunger for using." - Dr. Michael Miller, Addiction Medicine Physician

Your healthcare provider can determine the safest way to help you through withdrawal so that you can build a healthy, addiction-free life for yourself.