

LOWERING YOUR OPIOID DOSE

Taking opioids for pain over a long time is not recommended (unless the pain is caused by cancer). The benefits decrease and the risk of harm increases over time. Is this the right time for you to lower your dose or stop it completely?

Use this resource to discuss the pros and cons with your doctor and plan the best way to lower your dose.

Possible benefits of lowering your dose



Less pain



More activity,
socialising or work



Better mood



More alert



Able to drive more



Less side effects
and risk of overdose

Danger of not lowering your dose



Your dose may increase

The body gets used to opioids which means they don't work as well over time.



More harm the longer you use them

The chance of harm, such as side effects, increased pain and dependence, increases with time.

What's involved



Use other strategies to manage pain

You will need to use other strategies to manage pain before, during and after lowering your opioid dose. Strategies may include being more active, stretching or relaxation.



It takes time to lower your opioid medicine

Your opioid medicine will be reduced slowly. The time it takes depends on how much you take and your own circumstances.



You will need regular review and follow up with your doctor

It is important to see your doctor regularly while lowering your dose, to monitor your progress and talk about any issues you may be having.



Build your support network

Lowering your opioid can be difficult. Prepare your support group, including your family, friends and healthcare team.



Some people experience withdrawal symptoms

Symptoms may include flu-like symptoms, nausea, diarrhoea and stomach aches. These are temporary and usually not dangerous.

MY TAPERING PLAN

Record dose and set goal(s)

Current opioid medicine(s) and dose(s)

My goal(s)

Ideally you should work towards stopping your opioid, but lowering your dose (even a little bit) can help to reduce harms.

Mark your current oral morphine equivalent daily dose on the scale below. Doctors can help calculate this using a [dose calculator](#). You can also note your dose as it reduces to keep track of your progress.



Plan to lower your opioid dose

Use the table below to plan each step you'll take to lower your opioid dose.

Start date	How much (morning)	How much (night)	How long

Monitor your progress

Monitor and discuss your body, mind and lifestyle with your doctor, each time your dose changes.

Date / Dose	Body (eg, activity level, side effects, pain level)	Mind (eg, ability to think, sleep)	Lifestyle (eg, social life)

Find out more about:

- ▶ Opioids and how to deal with withdrawal symptoms, visit NPS MedicineWise www.nps.org.au/consumers/opioid-medicines
- ▶ Other ways to manage pain, visit Pain Management Network www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/chronic-pain
- ▶ Chronic pain, visit painaustralia www.painaustralia.org.au

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