

Withdrawal Symptoms

Withdrawal occurs because your brain works like a spring when it comes to addiction. Drugs and alcohol are brain depressants that push down the spring. They suppress your brain's production of neurotransmitters like noradrenaline. When you stop using drugs or alcohol it's like taking the weight off the spring, and your brain rebounds by producing a surge of adrenaline that causes withdrawal symptoms.

Every drug is different. Some drugs produce significant physical withdrawal (alcohol, opiates, and tranquilizers). Some drugs produce little physical withdrawal, but more emotional withdrawal (cocaine, marijuana, and ecstasy). Every person's physical withdrawal pattern is also different. You may experience little physical withdrawal. But that doesn't mean that you're not addicted, instead you may experience more emotional withdrawal.

Below are two lists of withdrawal symptoms. The first list is the emotional withdrawal symptoms produced by all drugs. You can experience them whether you have physical withdrawal symptoms or not. The second list is the physical withdrawal symptoms that usually occur with alcohol, opiates, and tranquilizers.

Emotional Withdrawal Symptoms

- Anxiety
- Restlessness
- Irritability
- Insomnia
- Headaches
- Poor concentration
- Depression
- Social isolation

Physical Withdrawal Symptoms

- Sweating
- Racing heart
- Palpitations

- Muscle tension
- Tightness in the chest
- Difficulty breathing
- Tremor
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea

Dangerous Withdrawal Symptoms

Alcohol and tranquilizers produce the most dangerous physical withdrawal.

Suddenly stopping alcohol or tranquilizers can lead to seizures, strokes, or heart attacks in high risk patients. A medically supervised detox can minimize your withdrawal symptoms and reduce the risk of dangerous complications. Some of the dangerous symptoms of alcohol and tranquilizer withdrawal are:

- Grand mal seizures
- Heart attacks
- Strokes
- Hallucinations
- Delirium tremens (DTs)

Withdrawal from opiates like heroin and oxycontin is extremely uncomfortable, but not dangerous unless they are mixed with other drugs. Heroin withdrawal on its own does not produce seizures, heart attacks, strokes, or delirium tremens.

(Reference: www.AddictionsAndRecovery.org)

Post-Acute Withdrawal

The first stage of withdrawal is the acute stage, which usually lasts for a few weeks. The second stage of withdrawal is the post-acute stage.

There are two stages of withdrawal. The first stage is the acute stage, which usually lasts at most a few weeks. During this stage, you may experience physical withdrawal symptoms. But every drug is different, and every person is different.

The second stage of withdrawal is called the Post Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (PAWS). During this stage you'll have fewer physical symptoms, but more emotional and psychological withdrawal symptoms.

Post-acute withdrawal occurs because your brain chemistry is gradually returning to normal. As your brain improves the levels of your brain chemicals fluctuate as they approach the new equilibrium causing post-acute withdrawal symptoms.

Most people experience some post-acute withdrawal symptoms. Whereas in the acute stage of withdrawal every person is different, in post-acute withdrawal most people have the same symptoms.

The Symptoms of Post-Acute Withdrawal

The most common post-acute withdrawal symptoms are:

- Mood swings
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Tiredness
- Variable energy
- Low enthusiasm
- Variable concentration
- Disturbed sleep

Post-acute withdrawal feels like a rollercoaster of symptoms. In the beginning, your symptoms will change minute to minute and hour to hour. Later as you recover further they will disappear for a few weeks or months only to return again. As you continue to recover the good stretches will get longer and longer. But the bad periods of post-acute withdrawal can be just as intense and last just as long.

Each post-acute withdrawal episode usually last for a few days. Once you've been in recovery for a while, you will find that each post-acute withdrawal episode usually lasts for a few days. There is no obvious trigger for most episodes. You will wake up one day feeling irritable and have low energy. If you hang on for just a few days, it will lift just as quickly as it started. After a while you'll develop confidence that you can get through post-acute withdrawal, because you'll know that each episode is time limited.

Post-acute withdrawal usually lasts for 2 years. This is one of the most important things you need to remember. If you're up for the challenge you can get through this. But if you think that post-acute withdrawal will only last for a few months, then you'll get caught off guard, and when you're disappointed you're more likely to relapse. (Reference: www.AddictionsAndRecovery.org)