

What to Expect When Receiving Medication for Opioid Use Disorder

Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) is a long-lasting disease. OUD affects both your emotions and behavior. It can affect financial, social and physical health conditions. Drug use has harmful consequences which can cause changes in your brain. It can also lead to loss of family and friends, employment, housing and even death. It is important to remember that with effective treatment, OUD is treatable. We're here to support you or a loved one to locate quality treatment. It is important to understand what to expect from your provider. Treatment should include:

- Assessment
- Individualized Care
- Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)
- Guided Termination from Treatment

Assessment

You will have a full assessment. It includes your medical, mental health and substance use history. You will also be assessed for any current mental health conditions (like depression or anxiety). Urine drug screening will be done during treatment to assess any recent substance use. Urine drug screenings are used to find out if you are taking your medication correctly. You and your providers can work on any difficulties you may be facing. Treatment contracts, medication counts, call backs and other things may also be used to help your recovery.

Substance use can increase your risk of infectious illnesses, such as HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, tuberculosis and others. Your doctor may test you for these. Work with your doctor to lower your risk for illnesses related to drug use. You may get medical treatment if needed. Your doctor should consult your state's PDMP (Prescription Drug Monitoring Program) before prescribing medication. This can improve safety by identifying if:

- you have been prescribed any controlled medications.
- multiple doctors are prescribing medications.
- any medications that could be harmful.
- you are taking medications as ordered.

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Individualized Care

Your treatment should also be individualized to your needs. A treatment plan will be developed with you. The treatment plan will be assessed and changed every so often as needed. Your treatment can include referrals to counseling, social services, community support groups or recovery support. Counseling can help you find out which feelings and behaviors cause you to use drugs. It can also help you learn ways to improve your life without drugs. Your counselor may use CBT (cognitive-behavioral therapy), family therapy, group therapy and motivational interviewing. Some providers have experience with substance use and have worked on their own recovery. Treatment can include finding helpful resources, learning new skills, improving relationships, having others guide you and setting goals.

Opioid use puts people at risk of overdose. Opioid overdose is an emergency. Naloxone is a medication used to treat overdose. You and your family and friends should have access to it. It is important to know how to use it. Call 911 in case of an emergency. Your provider will give you information on who to call after hours.

Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)

MAT is the use of medications to treat substance use disorders. Many people with OUD can benefit from MAT. It is the most effective way for individuals to recover long term. MAT may help people:

- get back to life activities such as parenting, work and school.
- lower the risk of relapse and overdose.
- reduce cravings.
- improve the ability to recover.
- increase the chance of gaining and keeping a job.

MAT reduces cravings that can lead to relapse and overdose. It is effective in increasing a person's ability to stay in treatment, which can save lives by preventing overdose deaths. If you are appropriate for receiving MAT, you'll be educated on the risks and benefits. Not receiving MAT can increase your risk of overdose after being discharged from withdrawal management. There is also a risk for early relapse if you do not receive MAT.

You'll want to ensure your medications are stored safely. Your prescriber will review safe storage, which will include:

- Utilizing a lock box to store medication.

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- Keeping the key in a separate secure location from the lock box.
- Keeping all medications out of reach of children.
- Disposing of old/expired or unused medication by taking it to a pharmacy or community take-back or throwing it away mixed with something like coffee grounds or cat litter.

While you are in treatment, you may be under the care of multiple clinicians. It is important for all providers and primary supports to work with one another. You will need to sign a release of information (ROI) to allow providers and your supports to help assist your recovery. Allowing communication can increase the effectiveness of treatment and improve satisfaction in the care you receive.

If you are unsure about the use the of MAT, talk with a prescriber to discuss your options. Some additional resources that may be helpful include:

- [Shatterproof: Stigma Reducing Guide](#)
- [SAMSHA Resource: The Power of Perceptions and Understanding](#)

Guided Termination from Treatment

Suddenly stopping your medication can be dangerous and may result in you returning to drug use. If you are thinking about stopping treatment, you should plan it with your providers. The decision to stop treatment may be made by your providers. In this case, they should tell you the date it will stop and the reason it will stop. They should help you find other treatment, if appropriate.

If you or a loved one needs assistance, please contact the Substance Use Member Hotline at 877-326-2458. Additional information is available at our [resource center](#).

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