



Medication Assisted Recovery

Opiates

Medications can be a useful tool in the journey of recovery. Although many people recover from addiction without choosing to take medication, many have benefited. Medications can be useful in recovery from mental and physical health issues in and these will be prescribed by your GP or mental health provider.

If we are going to prescribe anything for you it is important that we know about all of the medications that you are currently taking. Please bring your medication with you to appointments with the doctors here. The medications that you may be offered here are those that are prescribed by addiction specialists. These types of medications tend to work on the brain to readjust changes that have occurred during the addictive phase.

Medications are used to help you in your journey towards recovery, rather than treatment in their own right. There are a number of different medications, which are described in general terms here. We have leaflets about each of these medications so if you would like more detail please pick up one of these from Richmond House or ask your care coordinator for a copy.

Medications that are used in opiate detox

Medications can be helpful when a person is choosing to stop using a substance that they have become dependent on. We use medications to make the experience more comfortable, safe and to improve chances of success. Here at Pavilions we provide medication-assisted detox in the community to suitable individuals who are physically dependent on opiates (heroin, codeine, methadone, dihydrocodeine, buprenorphine). Benzodiazepine detox prescriptions are usually provided by your GP but Pavilions are able to provide support if you need it. Medications are sometimes used to support the withdrawal from other substances including GBL, stimulants and “legal highs”.

Medications used in an opiate detox:

1. **Buprenorphine (subutex)**: this is a long-acting opiate medication and can be used in a reducing dose to help manage any withdrawal from opiate dependence (heroin, codeine, methadone addiction).

2. **Methadone (physeptone)**: this is an alternative to buprenorphine. The medications are similar but there are some important differences and the choice of medication will be made by you and your prescriber.
3. **Lofexidine**: this is a non-opiate medication that can help with some of the symptoms of withdrawal from opiates. It can have an effect on blood pressure so this may be monitored during your treatment.
4. **Symptomatic medication**: a number of prescribed and over-the counter medications can be useful in coping with the symptoms of opiate withdrawal including anti-diarrhoeal medications (e.g. loperamide), anti-nausea medication (e.g. metoclopramide), medicines for muscle cramps and simple painkillers (e.g. paracetamol & aspirin).
5. **Naltrexone**: helps a little with relapse prevention by acting on the opioid system in the brain. It is not safe in some situations and regular blood monitoring is required.

Medications used to reduce the risk of opiate addiction

Methadone and buprenorphine have been used in this country for decades. They are valuable medications and their use is supported by [national guidance](#). These longer-acting opiates are used to replace the shorter acting opiates (like heroin, codeine, fentanyl) to enable the individual to rebuild their life. Medication is part of a wider-process of recovery. Many people will reduce the dose with time and may become abstinent from all medications. It is important to remember that whilst this medication isn't the whole answer you can be doing well while you taking it.