



Survival Guide



Introduction

Congratulations on making a healthy choice for yourself by choosing withdrawal management services! You may be feeling anxious and maybe even unwell at this moment, but it is important to congratulate yourself and give yourself a pat on the back for making the decision to take back control of your life.

Often when people decide to stop using substances, their memory starts to replay the “fun times” or “good feelings” they had when they were using. At these times, it can be useful to “play the tape” (your memories) up to current day, to what brought you to our services. Some individuals write down everything their substance use has taken from them at the beginning of their journey and review this list when triggering memories come up. When the going gets tough, it can be helpful to look back at your list to be reminded of the reasons for wanting to stop using substances, and why this is important to you.

Initially, using substances is often perceived as a positive, pleasurable, life enhancing activity as it can help people to relax and cope with emotions. For some, substances make them feel less fearful, more sociable, or even increase feelings of confidence and self-esteem. However, over time and with continued use, people often start to experience more negative effects and consequences to a point where they may feel they have lost all control over their substance use and that the substance is now controlling them. If this has happened to you, you need to know that by choosing to address your substance use at this time, you are giving yourself the opportunity to regain control of your life and start planning for a better future.



Our team is here to support you right at the beginning of your recovery journey. We will help connect you to the services that will continue to support you after you have completed your withdrawal. What can also help you through this time are positive, supportive people in your life. These people are family and friends who will help encourage you through your withdrawal. You might have some family and friends who may be triggering or unsupportive of the changes you want to make. If this is the case, you may find it necessary to take a “time out” from these people in order for you to stay focused and remain substance free throughout this process. If

these people care about you, they will respect your decision and allow you the time you need to get well.



What is “detoxing?”

Detoxing or withdrawal is a physiological process of the body ridding itself of the harmful substances as well as the healing process of the body re-adapting to be able to function without those substances. Substances have many harmful effects on our bodies. When we stop using, our body needs time to heal and it is during this time that our bodies eliminate toxins. Once this is completed, you are ready to begin the real work of recovery.

What is withdrawal management?



It is the medical and emotional support provided by health care professionals to help safely manage a person's withdrawal symptoms and minimize any associated risks. Medications may, or may not be prescribed to help relieve some of the withdrawal symptoms.

Different substances affect the body in different ways. There are some substances such as alcohol and benzodiazepines that are central nervous system **depressants**. Others such as crystal meth and cocaine are powerful **stimulants**. Opiates such as heroin, and Fentanyl (a narcotic pain medication) are both powerful depressants. These different substances produce different withdrawal symptoms, most often the exact opposite of the effects of the substance.

You may also find some of our “tips” helpful in getting you through your withdrawal. The tips provided in this booklet are meant to be a suggestion, as others have found them helpful during their withdrawal period.

Remember, it is always important to talk to a health care professional about your withdrawal management and to follow their advice. If you have any concerns during this period about your withdrawal, please call the START team.

Managing Withdrawal

Withdrawal is different for every individual. There are many factors affecting what your own experience will look like and what symptoms you will have. The important thing to know is that you are not alone. Our team will support and guide you through your withdrawal.

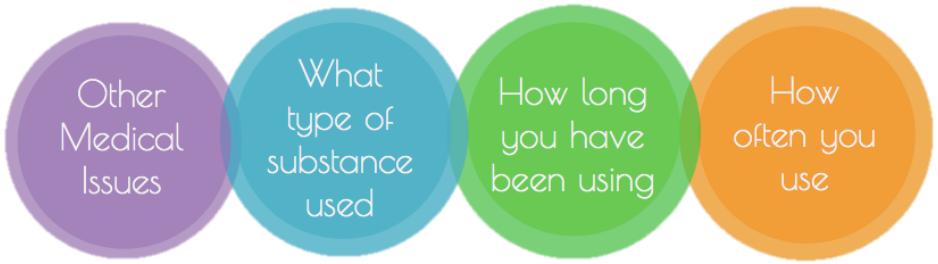


Effects of Substances



Substances have an impact on your core body functions such as breathing, your heart rate, consciousness, as well as your mental health. This is why you may experience anxiety and restlessness when the substance is removed. We will discuss how to manage your symptoms in the next few pages.

Withdrawal from a substance is dependent on many different things:



Withdrawal symptoms range anywhere from mild to severe:

- Mild (upset stomach, nausea, tremors)
- Severe (seizures, hallucinations)

This is why it is important to be assessed by a medical professional (doctor, nurse) prior to detoxing.

Some people can manage withdrawal at home, while others must be monitored in a residential detox setting with 24-hour observation by medical professionals for safety.

Common Withdrawal Symptoms



Vomiting
& Nausea



Loss
of Appetite



Insomnia,
Anxiety &
Restlessness



Diarrhea
or
Constipation



Headaches



Sweating
or
Chills



Watery Eyes
&
Runny Nose



Muscle
&
Bone Aches



Changes in Heart
Rate or Blood
Pressure



Abdominal
Cramps



Tremors or
shaking



Seizures or
Hallucinations
Emergency: Call 9-1-1

For some people, these symptoms appear unmanageable. We urge you to read through the following tips to get through this period, because it is important to remember that the symptoms are temporary. Also keep in mind that you may experience some or none of these symptoms.

Nausea/Vomiting: Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate!

We know that keeping down fluids may be hard, but it is important that you keep yourself hydrated.



When you are nauseated or vomiting, you are either not wanting to drink fluids or are losing fluids from vomiting. This means you are at risk of losing large amounts of body fluids and electrolytes, which are important in keeping your body's organs functioning.

Sport drinks (Gatorade) or flat ginger ale can help decrease your nausea and increase your body's fluid level. Jell-O powder mixed in warm water is also another great way to decrease nausea and help settle your stomach. Try to sip on broth soups and minimize eating spicy food at this time. Anti-nausea medications are also useful in controlling extreme cases of vomiting. Please let our team know if you need to use these medications.

Diarrhea: When you are experiencing diarrhea, your body's fluid level is being decreased, which can increase your risk of becoming dehydrated. Again, staying hydrated by drinking clear fluids (such as water or apple juice) is very important.

Refrain from eating/drinking dairy and try eating bananas, rice or bread instead. If you are experiencing heavy diarrhea, you can also consider taking an anti-diarrheal (eg. Imodium). Be sure to read the medication instructions, as taking too much can make you constipated.



Constipation: Some individuals may experience constipation while withdrawing from substances.

Again, hydration is important.

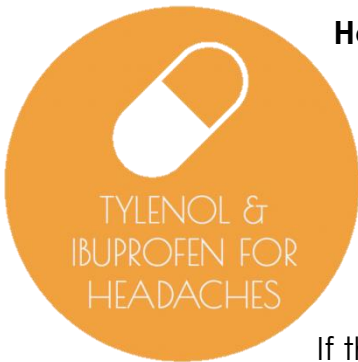
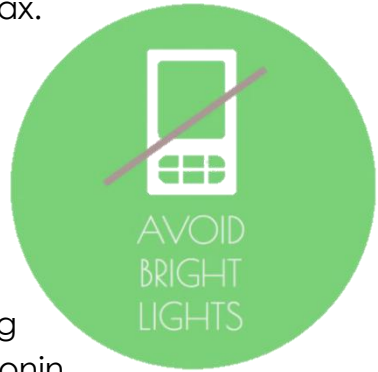


Increase your fluid intake and minimize dehydrating drinks (example: caffeinated coffee and tea). Drinking juice is known to help too! If you are still constipated, you can try using a medication to help (eg. Lactulose and PEG 3350).

Insomnia: Often individuals have problems with falling or staying asleep when they are withdrawing. There are some natural sleep remedies that can help you get

through this. Limiting your caffeine intake during the day, drinking warm milk with honey, and drinking decaffeinated tea can help you increase your body's natural sleep chemicals and relax.

Avoid watching TV or reading your tablet or phone prior to bed. The bright lights can affect your circadian rhythm (sleep rhythm). Try deep breathing and meditation before bed. If you are still having difficulty with sleep, using Melatonin can help regulate your sleep/wake cycle.



Headaches, fullness in the head.

People often experience headaches when withdrawing from substances. A dimly lit, quiet environment can help, as can an ice pack. Also remember to stay hydrated to prevent headaches.

If the headaches persist or are too troublesome, an over-the-counter analgesic such as Ibuprofen or Tylenol can help. The Doctor will recommend what medications to use.

Tremors: Relaxation techniques mentioned above have proven to be helpful with reducing tremors. If required, medications



that we provided you for your withdrawal can also help reduce the tremors. If your tremors become more severe, please inform the nurse or doctor.



Muscle Aches/Chills: Many clients have found relief from aches and pain by taking Epsom salt baths. This is also referred to as a thermal detox. A hot bath with Epsom salts promotes deep tissue healing and relaxes muscles. If your muscle pain becomes severe, over the counter extra strength Tylenol or Ibuprofen may also be helpful.

Agitation/Anxiety: Many clients report that they feel agitated or anxious during their withdrawal. During this time, the body is re-learning how to cope without a substance and so is your mind. When you were using, and a problem or uncomfortable situation arose, most of us drowned that feeling with a substance. When you stop using, it becomes important to start re-learning coping strategies to work through unpleasant feelings and situations.

Relaxation therapies such as listening to soft music, taking a hot bath, deep breathing, meditation, or taking a walk are helpful ways to relax you. Other people have found it



helpful to read a book, talk to a supportive person, or attend a support meeting. If these feelings become severe, please contact us.

Seizures and hallucinations: If you have a history of withdrawal that includes having experienced hallucinations or seizures, it would be considered unsafe to undertake withdrawal at home. Your withdrawal would require medical monitoring in a residential setting such as Vancouver Detox. If you do begin to

experience hallucinations or seizures, call Emergency Services (911) and contact our health care team.



What happens after detox?

There are many options following the physical detox part of your recovery journey. Whatever your goals and needs are, our team is here to support you. Consider some of the following options if you are unsure of where to start and review the START Resource Binder or Prezi presentation for more information.



Day Treatment Programs: Outpatient intensive treatment programs ranging from 6-12 weeks, which offer a range of program activities such as psycho-educational groups, counselling, acupuncture, cognitive behavioural therapy and more to support your recovery.

Residential Treatment Programs: Safe, substance-free residential facilities that provide structured programs for individuals whose assessment indicate they would benefit from intensive treatment. Some examples of services provided include individual and group therapy, psycho-social education and life-skills training. Programs may also provide medical, nursing or psychiatric support.

Adult Support Recovery: A substance-free residential setting that provides time-limited supports and services for clients in recovery who require a longer term structured environment while preparing to transition into a more stable lifestyle.

Transitional Services: Temporary, substance-free residential settings for individuals who are experiencing substance use problems and require short to medium term supports anywhere from one to 30 days. Clients may be transitioning into or out of residential settings, awaiting housing, or need help developing an adequate plan for their continued recovery.

Self-Help Programs: Groups where individuals, in recovery from their own substance use problems, meet regularly in the community to share their experience, strength and hope and support each other in recovery.

Counselling or Support Services: Opportunities where professionals listen and work with you to identify patterns,

help you develop a plan to reach your goals, and better understand yourself. Many find that counselling is helpful in identifying individual strengths, tap into existing resources and also create new ones.




We understand that there are often many more questions that you may have regarding where to go or what to do after detox. That is why our team has put together a wide variety of resources and programs for you to consider based on your personal needs.

If you have a computer at home, please visit our Prezi resource presentation at the following link in your internet browser:

https://prezi.com/jois7fqv9ufl/substance-use-treatment-and-response-team/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy



Tip: Use the  icon to make the presentation full screen and use the arrow keys to move forward or go back within the presentation.

If you do not have a computer, or have more questions about the resources available, please do not hesitate to speak to our team. You can also request to see the START Resource Binder or make an appointment with a nurse who will guide you through the many choices.



Know that you are not alone.

Please contact the Substance use
Treatment And Response Team (START)
with any questions, comments, or concerns.

Email us at: START.team@vch.ca

Contact us at: **604.675.2455**

