


2.18 OPIOID WITHDRAWAL – February EMSAC 2023

BLS Treatment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Position of comfort.• NPO except as noted below.• Oxygen as indicated.
ALS Treatment
<p style="text-align: center;">OPIOID WITHDRAWAL</p> <p>Assess for symptoms of opioid withdrawal, which may include diaphoresis, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and agitation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• For symptomatic suspected opioid withdrawal due to drug abstinence or Naloxone administration, perform a COWS (Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Score). If COWS greater than or equal to 7, assess for Buprenorphine/Suboxone eligibility (see Appendix A). <p>COWS Link and QR Code</p> 
Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Document the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Administration of Naloxone/Buprenorphine (Route, Dose, Complications)○ Initial and Secondary COWS○ Reason for Non-Enrollment (Exclusion Criteria)○ Reason if Non-Transport of Enrolled Patient• A patient is considered enrolled by receiving their first dose of Buprenorphine by EMS.• If a patient receives Buprenorphine but does not wish to be transported, a Base Hospital Physician shall be contacted under Policy 4040 for non-transport. Consider contacting the Community Paramedicine Captain (CP5) at (628) 200-1139 for additional resources and follow up information for the patient.

2.18 OPIOID WITHDRAWAL – February EMSAC 2023

Appendix A – Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Score (COWS)

Clinical Opioid Withdrawal Scale (COWS)

Anxiety or Irritability

- 0 None
- 1 Reports increasing irritability or anxiousness
- 2 Obviously irritable or anxious
- 4 Too irritable to participate or affecting participation

Bone or Joint Aches

If patient was having pain previously, only additional pain attributed to withdrawal is scored

- 0 Not present
- 1 Mild diffuse discomfort
- 2 Reports severe diffuse aching of joints/muscles
- 4 Pt rubbing joints or muscles and unable to be still

GI Upset *Over last ½ hour*

- 0 No GI symptoms
- 1 Stomach cramps
- 2 Nausea or loose stool
- 3 Vomiting or diarrhea
- 5 Multiple episodes of diarrhea or vomiting

Gooseflesh Skin

- 0 Skin is smooth
- 3 Piloerection of skin can be felt or arm hairs standing up
- 5 Prominent piloerection

Pupil Size

- 0 Pupils pinned or normal sized for ambient light
- 1 Pupils possibly larger than normal for ambient light
- 2 Pupils moderately dilated
- 5 Pupils very dilated

Runny Nose or Tearing

Not accounted for by cold symptoms nor allergies

- 0 Not present
- 1 Nasal stuffiness or unusually moist eyes
- 2 Nose running or eyes tearing
- 4 Nose constantly running or tears streaming down face

Resting Heart Rate

Measured after sitting for 1 minute

- 0 ≤ 80 BPM
- 1 81-100 BPM
- 2 101-120 BPM
- 4 ≥ 120 BPM

Restlessness *Observed during assessment*

- 0 Able to sit still
- 1 Reports difficulty sitting still, but able to do so
- 3 Frequent shifting or extraneous movement of legs/arms
- 5 Unable to sit still for more than a few seconds

Tremor *Observation of outstretched hands*

- 0 No tremors
- 1 Tremor can be felt but not observed
- 2 Slight tremor observable
- 4 Gross tremors or muscle twitching

Yawning *Observation during assessment*

- 0 No yawning
- 1 Yawning once or twice during assessment
- 2 Yawning three or more times during assessment
- 4 Yawning several times/minute

Sweating

Over past ½ hour not accounted for by environment or activity

- 0 No report of chills or flushing
- 1 Subjective report of chills or flushing
- 2 Flushed or observable moistness to face
- 3 Beads of sweat on brow or face
- 4 Sweat streaming off face

TOTAL COWS SCORE:

- 5-12 = mild
- 13-24 = moderate
- 25-36 = moderately severe
- > 36 = severe withdrawal

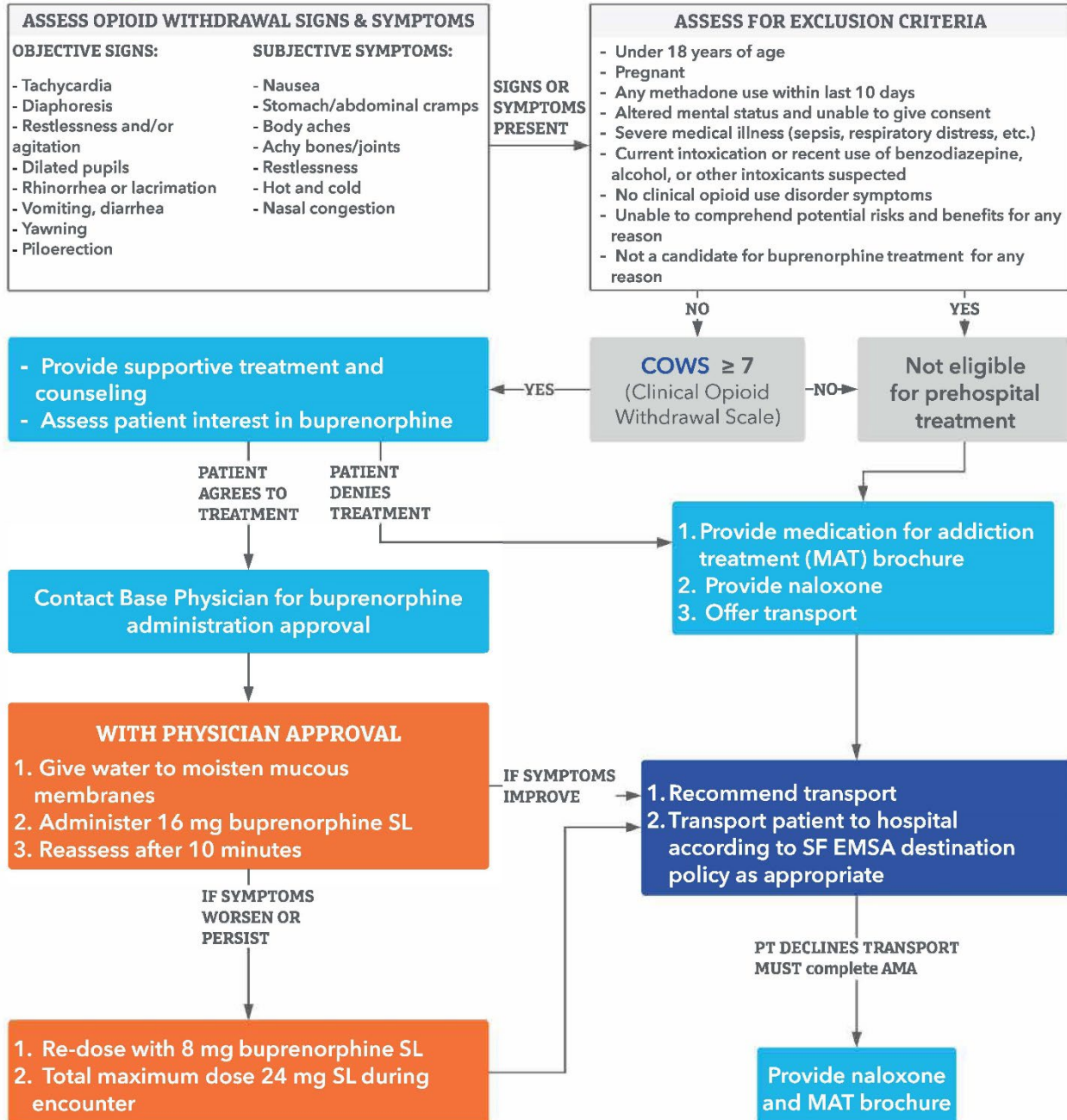
2.18 OPIOID WITHDRAWAL – February EMSAC 2023

Appendix B – Buprenorphine Local Optional Scope of Practice Protocol



Emergency Medical Services

Opioid Withdrawal: Adult Medical Treatment Guidelines



This project was supported by the CARESTAR Foundation. CA Bridge is a program of the Public Health Institute. The Public Health Institute promotes health, well-being and quality of life for people throughout California, across the nation, and around the world. © 2022, California Department of Health Care Services.

TREATMENT GUIDELINES

January 2023

SAN FRANCISCO EMS AGENCY
 Effective: xxxxxx
 Supersedes: xxxxxx