2.18 OPIOID WITHDRAWAL- EMSAC JULY 2024

BLS Treatment	
Position of comfort.	
NPO except as noted below.	
Oxygen as indicated.	
ALS Treatment	
OPIATE WITHDRAWAL	
Assess for symptoms of opioid withdrawal, which may include diaphoresis, nausea,	
vomiting, abdominal pain, and agitation.	
 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 <mark>8</mark> , assess for Buprenorphine/Suboxone eligibility	
(see Appendix A).	
Notes	
Document the following: Administration of Nalexono (Bunranerphine (Boute, Dece, Complications)	
 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.	

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Appendix A – Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Score (COWS)

Clinical Opioid Withdrawal Scale (COWS)

Anxiety or Irritability

- 0 None
- Reports increasing irritability or anxiousness 1
- 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

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

GI Upset Over last 1/2 hour

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

Gooseflesh Skin

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

Pupil Size

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

Runny Nose or Tearing

Not accounted for by cold symptoms nor allergies

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

Resting Heart Rate

Measured after sitting for 1 minute

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

Restlessness Observed during assessment

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

Tremor Observation of outstretched hands

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

Yawning Observation during assessment

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

Sweating

Over past 1/2 hour not accounted for by environment or activity

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

TOTAL COWS SCORE:

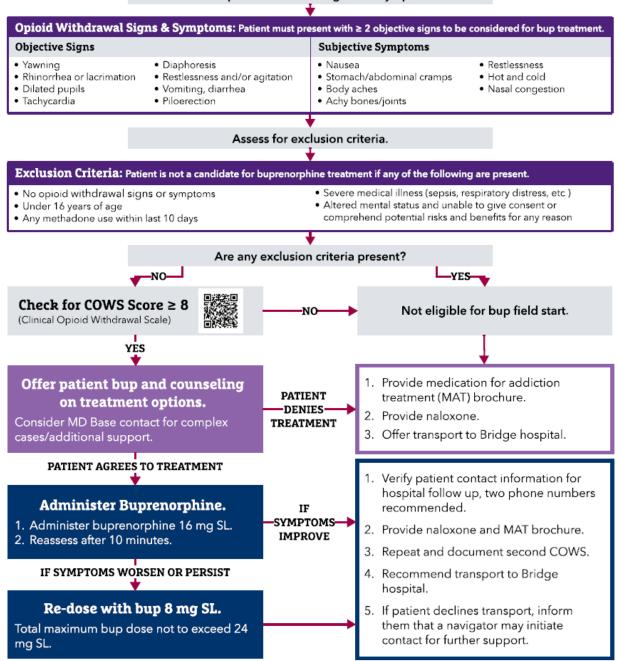
- 13-24 = moderate
- 25-36 = moderately severe
- > 36 = severe withdrawal

- 5-12 = mild

2.18 OPIOID WITHDRAWAL- EMSAC JULY 2024

Appendix B – Buprenorphine Local Optional Scope of Practice Protocol

Assess opioid withdrawal signs and symptoms.



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