



Opioids

What is it?

There are many types of opioids, including prescription opioids such as morphine and illegal opioids such as heroin. Opioids are meant to assist with pain relief.

People who use opioids for a long time might find it hard to stop and can become dependent. They can find it hard to control how often they use and can have strong cravings. Stopping opioids can be hard but it is possible. There are many treatments for people who have an opioid dependence.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP will work with you to develop a long-term plan for managing your opioid use. The aim of your plan is to no longer be dependent on opioids and treat any related health concerns.

The plan may include referrals to:

- An inpatient detox unit or residential facility
- Opioid substitution treatment, such as buprenorphine or methadone. These are medications that stop the cravings
- Drug and alcohol counselling or to a support group

Your GP may give you information about how to reduce harm if you keep using. They might prescribe you naloxone. This medication can help prevent an overdose from being deadly. They may also provide information about where to [get clean needles](#) if you [inject](#) your opioids.

Your GP may also check your health, take tests and treat any health concerns that may be linked to your opioid use.

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP may see you regularly to check your plan and progress. If you're still finding it difficult to stop taking opioids, your GP may discuss changing your plan and explore other treatment options with you.

What can I do?

If you think you are dependent on opioids, talk to your GP. Your GP is here to help you manage your health and make sure you find the help you need to get better. Be honest and open about your opioid use.

Your GP will make sure you are getting the support you need to overcome your drug and alcohol issues. Attend all the appointments your GP makes for you. If you are finding it difficult or stressful, ask your GP for a referral if you'd like to talk to a counsellor.

Reducing Harm

If you are going to use opioids, take steps to reduce harm



If you inject opioids, use safe injecting practices and do not share needles



Ask your GP for a naloxone prescription

Don't use opioids with other drugs as it increases the risk of overdose

When should I call an ambulance?



If you or someone you know has any suspected signs of a drug overdose, phone Triple 0 (000) immediately.

What supports are available?

South Western Sydney Drug Health Services

Drug Health Services provides a range of services for people with drug and alcohol dependence. This includes medical services such as inpatient detoxification and opioid substitution (methadone and buprenorphine) clinics. They also offer counselling, advice and referrals to other treatment programs. Your GP can refer you or you can contact the central intake line on **9616 8586**.

Other support services

There are many other types of supports available to people experiencing drug and alcohol issues. They include:

- Individual and group programs
- Support groups
- Residential rehabilitation programs
- Detox units
- Phone support
- Needle and syringe programs

To find out more about what services are available, go to the Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) website at yourroom.health.gov.au or call **1800 250 015**.

There are also a number of [e-health resources](#) available.



What questions could I ask my doctor?

- What are the risks of long-term opioid use?*
- Where can I get help to stop using?*
- Do I need medication?*

- What if I can't stop?*
- How does opioid substitution work?*
- Should I carry naloxone?*



Where can I learn more?

- **Australian Drug Foundation** - heroin: adf.org.au
- **Your Room** - heroin: yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au
- **Your Room** - prescription opioids: yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au
- **Health Resource Directory Factsheets:**
 - [Safe Injecting Practices](#)
 - [Needle and Syringe Programs](#)