

SUBJECT: TREATMENT PROTOCOL -
OPIOID WITHDRAWAL / OPIOID USE DISORDER COWS SCORE

Date: 07/1/2023

Instructions

For each item, select the number that best describes the patient's sign or symptom. Rate it on just the apparent relationship to opiate withdrawal. For example, if heart rate is increased because the patient was jogging prior to assessment, the increased pulse rate would not be added to the score. The scores will be added together on the final page for a total COWS score.

Resting Pulse Rate <i>Measured after the patient is sitting or lying down for 1 minute</i> 0 = pulse rate <80 BPM 1 = pulse rate 81-100 BPM 2 = pulse rate 101-120 BPM 4 = pulse rate >120 BPM Score =	Gastrointestinal Upset <i>Over the past 30 minutes</i> 0 = no GI symptoms 1 = stomach cramps 2 = nausea or loose stool 3 = vomiting or diarrhea 5 = multiple episodes of diarrhea or vomiting Score =
Sweating <i>Over the past 30 minutes not accounted for by room temperature or patient activity</i> 0 = no report of chills or flushing 1 = subjective report of chills or flushing 2 = flushed or observable moistness on face 3 = beads of sweat on brow or face 4 = sweat streaming off of face Score =	Tremor <i>Observation of outstretched hands</i> 0 = no tremor 1 = tremor can be felt, but not observed 2 = slight tremor observable 4 = gross tremor or muscle twitching Score =
Restlessness <i>Observation during assessment</i> 0 = able to sit still 1 = reports difficulty sitting still, but is able to 3 = frequent shifting or extraneous movements of arms or legs 5 = unable to sit still for more than a few seconds Score =	Yawning <i>Observation during assessment</i> 0 = no yawning 1 = yawning 1-2 times during assessment 2 = yawning 3+ times during assessment 4 = yawning several times per minute Score =

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Pupil Size 0 = pupils pinned or normal size for room light 1 = pupils possibly larger than normal for room light 2 = pupils moderately dilated 5 = pupils so dilated that only the rim of the iris is visible Score =	Anxiety or Irritability 0 = none 1 = patient reports increasing irritability or anxiousness 2 = patient obviously irritable or anxious 4 = patient so irritable or anxious that participation in the assessment is difficult Score =
Bone or Joint Aches <i>If the patient was having pain previously, only the additional component attributed to opioid withdrawal is scored</i> 0 = not present 1 = mild, diffuse discomfort 2 = patient reports severe diffuse aching of joints or muscles 4 = patient is rubbing joints or muscles and is unable to sit still because of discomfort Score =	Gooseflesh Skin (Goosebumps) 0 = skin is smooth 3 = piloerection of skin can be felt or hairs standing up on arms 5 = prominent piloerection Score =
Runny Nose or Tearing <i>Not accounted for by cold symptoms or allergies</i> 0 = not present 1 = nasal stuffiness or unusually moist eyes 2 = nose running or tearing 4 = nose constantly running or tears streaming down cheeks Score =	Total Score <i>Sum of all 11 criteria</i> Score = Interpretation Score >5 = no active withdrawal Score 5-12 = mild withdrawal Score 13-24 = moderate withdrawal Score 25-36 = moderately severe withdrawal Score >36 = severe withdrawal Interpretation =

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Patient's Name	Date & Time of Assessment
Assessing Paramedic's Name	Interpretation of Assessment

A digital version of this tool can be found at: <https://tinyurl.com/yc7v95jn>

OR by scanning the QR code



COWS Criteria from Wesson DR, Ling W. The Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale (COWS). *J Psychoactive Drugs*. 2003;35(2):253-259. DOI:10.1080/02791072.2003.10400007. Reproduced and modified for clinical use with permission.