
How to Ask DSM-5 Focused Questions for Opioid Use Disorder

Introduction

Like all substance use disorders, opioid use disorder (OUD), defined by the DSM-5, includes 11 criteria. While most experienced clinicians can diagnose OUD without going through a formal checklist of symptoms, we suggest you try using this sheet during interviews. You are likely to find it helpful in at least two ways.

First, you can use the criteria to more accurately categorize the severity of your patient's OUD:

- Mild: two to three DSM-5 criteria
- Moderate: four to five DSM-5 criteria
- Severe: more than five DSM-5 criteria

Second, you can use the criteria to show your patient that there are objective symptoms leading to the diagnosis of OUD. This may lessen the stigma attached to the diagnosis and help your patient identify with the diagnosis and invest in treatment.

Below, we suggest questions for each of the 11 criteria. Although the DSM-5 doesn't explicitly divide the criteria into categories, we find it helpful to do so, and below we list them under four broad clusters: impairment of control, social consequences, risky behavior, and tolerance/withdrawal.

Questions About Time Spent Obtaining Opioids (Impairment of Control)

Cravings:

- "Do you have cravings (urges to use opioids)?"

Using more than planned:

- "Do you often use more opioids than you really want to or intend to?"

Unable to quit despite attempts to do so:

- "Have you tried to cut down or quit using opioids before?"
- "What is the longest time you have been abstinent? How long ago was that?"

Significant time spent obtaining or recovering from opioids:

- "How often do you go to the pharmacy or dealer?"
- "How long do you spend using opioids?"
- "How many hours per day do you avoid family or work because of using opioids or recovering from their effects?"

Questions About Activities Given Up Over Time Due to Opioid Use (Social Consequences)

1. *Activities given up due to opioid use:* "Are you spending less time with your family than before?" "Have you avoided going out because you are at home using opioids instead?"
2. *Failure to fulfill major role obligations:* "Have you had to take time off from work or call in sick because of opioid use?"
3. *Persistent social and interpersonal problems:* "How much time do you spend socializing in settings that don't involve opioids? Is this less time than before?" "Do you have arguments with friends or family over opioid use?" "Have you lost contact with friends due to opioid use?"

Questions About Use in Hazardous Situations (Risky Behavior)

4. *Recurrent use in physically hazardous situations:* "Have you ever used opioids while driving or operating heavy machinery?" "Have you ever used opioids while on the job?"
5. *Continued use despite knowledge of negative consequences:* "Have you continued to use opioids after hearing from a doctor about medical problems caused by opioid use or learning about the risk of overdose?" "Have you continued to use opioids after experiencing any personal or medical problems, including overdose, caused by opioid use?"

Questions About Tolerance and Withdrawal

6. *Tolerance:* "Do you need to use more opioids than you previously did to achieve the same effect?"
7. *Withdrawal:* "Have you been through opioid withdrawal before?" "Do you experience opioid withdrawal symptoms between doses?" "Have you had problems with sleep, mood, or physical symptoms after stopping or reducing opioid use?"