

Subjective Opiate Withdrawal Scale (SOWS) Fact Sheet for Patients

Introduction

The Subjective Opiate Withdrawal Scale (SOWS) is a scale that can be used to define the severity of opioid withdrawal symptoms at home without the involvement of a health care provider. This scale can be used at home when starting buprenorphine. Once you start experiencing withdrawal, score your symptoms every few hours—you should be ready for your first buprenorphine dose once your total score adds up to 10 or higher.

Patient Instructions

At the top of the first column below, write in today's date and time, and in the rows underneath, write in a number from 0 to 4 corresponding to how you feel about each symptom *right now*.

Scale: 0 = not at all, 1 = a little, 2 = moderately, 3 = quite a bit, 4 = extremely.

Date					
Time					
Symptom	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score
I feel anxious					
I feel like yawning					
I am perspiring					
My eyes are teary					
I have goosebumps					
I am shaking					
I have hot flashes					
My bones and muscles ache					
I feel restless					
I feel nauseous					
I feel like vomiting					
My muscles twitch					
I have stomach cramps					
I feel like using now					
TOTAL					

Mild withdrawal = score of 1–10

Moderate withdrawal = score of 11–20

Severe withdrawal = score of 21–30

Source: Adapted from Handelman L et al, *Am J Drug Alcohol Abuse* 1987;13(3):293–308.