**A practical guide to safe psychiatric drug withdrawal**

The withdrawal process is highly individual.

Before starting a withdrawal process, you must be prepared for the abstinence symptoms appearing on the list.

Abstinence symptoms are positive signs that your body begins a recovery process.

Be prepared for physical symptoms, unexpected feelings and thoughts that may be effects of the drug withdrawal.

You must take responsibility for your drug withdrawal.

Discuss your drug withdrawal with your doctor.

You might wish to bring a withdrawal proposal to your doctor.

If your doctor disagrees with your wish to withdraw from psychiatric drugs, find yourself another doctor.

Begin the withdrawal with the drug you use.

Reduce, for example, the dose every second week from 100% to 90% to 80%, etc. of the normal dose, and remember to adjust the rate of withdrawal according to how you feel about it.

Register withdrawal symptoms in a chart or diary, or both.

If the withdrawal symptoms feel terrible, try to endure them a little longer, or go back to the previous dose and reduce the pace of withdrawal.

Abstinence symptoms are often similar to the symptoms you were medicated for.

You should not take medication for withdrawal symptoms.

Do something good for yourself.

Make sure you have a friend or a family member with whom you can discuss your withdrawal process and who can observe you.

Consult the pharmacy about dividing tablets or opening capsules.

**List of abstinence symptoms you may experience during withdrawal**People respond differently to drugs and to withdrawal. Some feel withdrawal symptoms very clearly, others hardly notice them.

When withdrawing from drugs, you or your relatives may be surprised that thoughts, feelings and actions change. This is normal but can be unpleasant.

Unfortunately, during the withdrawal process, doctors often interpret abstinence symptoms as a relapse to the condition for which you were medicated. This, however, is rarely the case.  
  
Below you will find a list of symptoms you may experience. They are usually harmless and will last a few days.

**Flu-like symptoms**Joint and muscle pain, fever, cold sweats, a cold, sore eyes.  
  
**Headache**Headache, migraine, electric shocks/head zaps.  
  
**Balance**Dizziness, balance problems, unsteady walking, "hangover" or a feeling of motion sickness.

**Joints and muscles**Stiffness, anaesthethized or burning feeling, cramps, muscle twitching.  
  
**Senses**Trembling, tingling in the skin, pain, low pain threshold, restless legs, cannot sit still, blurred vision, light and sound hypersensitivity, tension around the eyes, ringing in the ears, tinnitus, slurred speech, taste and smell changes, lip twitching, drooling or excessive production of saliva.  
  
**Stomach, gut and appetite**Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, bloating, increased or decreased appetite.

**Mood**Mood swings, depression, crying easily, sense of inadequacy, euphoria (feeling high), mania-like reactions.

**Anxiety**Anxiety attacks, panic, agitation, chest pain, quivering, shallow breathing.  
  
**Perception of reality**Feeling of alienation and unreality, being inside a cheese-dish cover, visual and auditory hallucinations, delusions, psychosis.

**Irritability and aggression**Irritability, aggression, angry outbursts, impulsiveness, self-harm, thoughts about harming others.

**Memory and confusion**Confusion, poor concentration, loss of memory.  
  
**Sleep**Insomnia, difficulty falling asleep, waking up early, intense dreams, nightmares that sometimes are violent.

**Energy**Low energy, restlessness, hyperactivity.  
  
**Other**  
Suicidal thoughts, sweating, heart palpitations.

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**Neuroleptics (incl. lithium)**(for mania, psychosis and hallucinations)

**Sedatives and sleeping tablets**  
(for anxiety and insomnia)

**Depression pills**(for anxiety and depression)

**Speed-like drugs**(for ADHD)

**Epilepsy drugs**(for anxiety and bipolar)