

COWS

Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale

Name:

Date:

Interval	0	30 minutes	2 hours	4 hours
Time				
	Score	Score	Score	Score
Resting heart rate (measure after lying or sitting for 1 minute): [0] HR 80 or below [1] HR 81-100 [2] HR 101-120 [4] HR greater than 120				
Sweating (preceding 30 minutes and not related to room temp /activity): [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 face				
Restlessness (observe during assessment): [0] Able to sit still [1] Reports difficulty sitting still, but is able to do so [3] Frequent shifting or extraneous movements of legs/arms [5] Unable to sit still for more than a few seconds				
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				
Bone or joint aches (not including existing joint pains): [0] Not present [1] Mild diffuse discomfort [2] Patient reports severe diffuse aching of joints/ muscles [4] Patient is rubbing joints / muscles plus unable to sit still due to discomfort				
Runny nose or tearing (not related to URTI or allergies): [0] Not present [1] Nasal stuffiness or unusually moist eyes [2] Nose running or tearing [4] Nose constantly running or tears streaming down cheeks				
GI upset (over last 30 minutes): [0] No GI symptoms [1] Stomach cramps [2] Nausea or loose stool [3] Vomiting or diarrhoea [5] Multiple episodes of vomiting or diarrhoea				
Tremor (observe outstretched hands): [0] No tremor [1] Tremor can be felt, but not observed [2] Slight tremor observable [4] Gross tremor or muscle twitching				
Yawning (observe during assessment): [0] No yawning [1] Yawning once or twice during assessment [2] Yawning three or more times during assessment [4] Yawning several times/minute				
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				
Gooseflesh skin [0] Skin is smooth [3] Piloerection (goosebumps) of skin can be felt or hairs standing up on arms [5] Prominent piloerection				
Score interpretation: 5-12 = Mild 13-24 = Moderate 25-36 = Moderately severe > 36 = Severe withdrawal	Total			
	Initials			

Source: Wesson DR, Ling W. The Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale (COWS). Journal of Psychoactive Drugs. 2003;35(2):253-9. doi: 10.1080/02791072.2003.10400007

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