

## Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale

For each item, mark the choice that best describes the patient's signs or symptoms.

1. Resting pulse rate:

Measured after patient is sitting or lying  
for 1 minute

Pulse rate 80 or below %0

Pulse rate 81-100 %1

Pulse rate 101-120 %2

Pulse rate greater than 120 %4

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ bpm

2. GI upset:

Over last ½ hour

No GI symptoms %0

Stomach cramps %1

Nausea or loose stool %2

Vomiting or diarrhea %3

Multiple episodes of diarrhea or vomiting %5

3. Sweating:

Over past ½ hour not accounted for by  
room temperature or patient activity

No chills or flushing %0

Subject report of chills or flushing %1

Flushed or observable moistness on face %2

Beads of sweat on brow or face %3

Sweat streaming off face %4

4. Tremor:

Observation of outstretched hands

No tremor %0

Tremor can be felt, but not observed %1

Slight tremor observable %2

Gross tremor or muscle twitching %4

5. Restlessness:

Able to sit still %0

Reports difficulty sitting still, but is able to do so %1

Frequent shifting or extraneous movements of legs/arms %3

Unable to sit still for more than a few seconds %5

Reference: Wesson DR; Ling W. The Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale (COWS). J Psychoactive Drugs 2003;  
35(2): 253-259.

SCORE:

Patient Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_ \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ \_\_\_

6. Yawning:

No yawning %00

Yawning once or twice during assessment %01

Yawning three or more times during assessment %02

Yawning several times per minute

7. Pupil size:

Pupils pinned or normal size for room light %00

Pupils possibly larger than normal for room light %01

Pupils moderately dilated %02

Pupils so dilated that only the rim of the iris is visible %05

8. Anxiety or irritability

None

Patient reports increasing irritability or anxiousness %01

Patient obviously irritable or anxious %02

Patient so irritable or anxious that participation in the assessment is difficult %04

9. Bone or joint aches:

Not present %00

Mild diffuse discomfort %01

Patient reports severe diffuse aching of joints/muscles %02

Patient is rubbing joints or muscles and is unable to sit still because of discomfort %04

10. Gooseflesh skin Skin is smooth %00

Piloerection of skin can be felt or hairs standing on arms %03

Prominent piloerection %05

11. Runny nose or tearing:

Not accounted for by cold  
symptoms or allergies

Not present %00

Nasal stuffiness or unusually moist eyes %01

Nose constantly running or tears streaming down cheeks %04

The total score is the sum of all 11 items. **Total Score:** \_\_\_\_

5-12=mild

13-24=moderate

25-36=moderately severe

more than 36=severe withdrawal

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SCORE:

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