

Your Child's Taper Plan

After having medicines for pain or sedation

Medicines for pain and sedation including opioids, such as morphine, oxycodone and methadone, or benzodiazepines, such as lorazepam (Ativan) given over long periods of time need to be slowly removed, or tapered rather than stopped abruptly. This handout describes why and how to safely reduce the amount of medicine given to your child.

Why do these medicines need to be tapered?

When children need long-term pain control or sedation their bodies may get used to the medicine (become tolerant) and need a higher dose of pain medicine to get the same pain relief. Because the body becomes used to having these medicines, when the pain improves and the drugs are no longer needed, the dose needs to be slowly reduced to prevent symptoms of withdrawal and suffering. The body's dependence on the medicine is not the same as addiction.

What is withdrawal?

Withdrawal is a body's natural reaction to not having the medicine it has become used to. Your child may have mild withdrawal signs with tapering. The goal is to keep your child comfortable while safely reducing the dose to the point the medicine is no longer given. Severe withdrawal can be very uncomfortable. If your child's body shows these signs of withdrawal, their taper plan may need to slow down even more:

- Nausea or vomiting
- Yawning or sneezing in infants
- Diarrhea or stomach pain
- Trouble sleeping
- Sweating
- Irritability or fussiness
- Runny nose or drooling
- Chills or fever

What is a taper plan?

A taper plan includes the doses of medicine and timeline for reducing the amount of medicine given. Your child's provider will give you a specific plan for your child, based on to their weight, history with the medicine and health.

When do I need to call my child's provider?

Call your child's healthcare provider if your child shows signs of withdrawal or pain. Their plan may need to be changed. Any changes to the plan must be made by your child's provider.

To Learn More

- Children's Operator
206-987-2000
Ask to speak to:

_____ (provider name)

- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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