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UNDERSTANDING OPIOID DEPENDENCE

Opioid dependence is a disease in which there are biological or physical, psychological, and social changes. Some of the physical changes include the need for increasing amounts of opioid to produce the same effect, symptoms of withdrawal, feelings of craving, and changes in sleep patterns. Psychological components of opioid dependence include a reliance on heroin or other drugs to help you cope with everyday problems or inability to feel good or celebrate without using heroin or opioids. The social components of opioid dependence include less frequent contact with important people in your life and an inability to participate in important events due to drug use. In extreme cases, there may even be criminal and legal implications. The hallmarks of opioid dependence are the continued use of drugs despite their negative affect, the need for increasing amounts of opioids to have the same effect and the development of withdrawal symptoms upon cessation.

There are a variety of factors than can contribute to the continued use of opioids. Among these are the use of heroin to escape from or cope with problems, the need to use increasing amounts of heroin to achieve the same effect, and the need for a “high.”

Treatment

Treatment for opioid dependence is best considered a long-term process.

Recovery from opioid dependence is not an easy or painless process, as it involves changes in drug use and lifestyle, such as adopting new coping skills. Recovery can involve hard work, commitment, discipline, and a willingness to examine the effects of opioid dependence on your life. At first, it isn't unusual to feel impatient, angry, or frustrated.

The changes you need to make will depend on how opioid dependence has specifically affected your life. The following are some of the common areas of change to think about when developing your specific recovery plan:

Physical – good nutrition, exercise, sleep and relaxation.

Emotional – learning to cope with feelings, problems, stresses and negative thinking without relying on opioids.

Social – developing relationships with sober people, learning to resist pressures from others to use or misuse substances, and developing healthy social and leisure interests to occupy your time and give you a sense of satisfaction and pleasure.

Family – examining the impact opioid dependence has had on your family, encouraging them to get involved in your treatment, mending relationships with family members, and working hard to have mutually satisfying relationships with family members.

Spiritual – learning to listen to your inner voice for support and strength, and using that voice to guide you in developing a renewed sense of purpose and meaning.

During the treatment process, SUBOXONE will help you avoid many or all of the physical symptoms of opioid withdrawal. These typically include craving, restlessness, poor sleep, irritability, yawning, muscle cramps, runny nose, tearing, goose-flesh, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Your doctor may prescribe other medications for you as necessary to help relieve these symptoms.

You should be careful not to respond to these withdrawal symptoms by losing patience with the treatment process and thinking that the symptoms can only be corrected by using drugs. To help you deal with the symptoms of withdrawal, you should try to set small goals and work towards them.