

Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale (COWS)

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1. Please enter the client's information:

First Name:

Last Name:

Client DOB::

2. Reason for this assessment:

3. For each item, circle the number that best describes the patient's signs or symptoms. Rate on just the apparent relationship to opiate withdrawal. For example, if heart rate is increased because the patient was jogging just prior to assessment, the increase pulse rate would not add to the score.

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Resting Pulse Rate: Measured after patient is sitting or lying for one minute	pulse rate 80 or below	pulse rate 81-100	pulse rate 101 - 120	-	pulse rate greater than 120	-
Sweating: over past 1/2 hour not accounted for by room temperature or patient activity.	no report of chills or flushing	subjective report of chills or flushing	flushed or observable moistness on face	beads of sweat on brow or face	sweat streaming off face	-
Restlessness Observation during assessment	able to sit still	reports difficulty sitting still, but is able to do so	-	frequent shifting or extraneous movements of legs/arms	-	unable to sit still for more than a few seconds
Pupil size	pupils pinned or normal size for room light	pupils possibly larger than normal for room light	pupils moderately dilated	-	-	pupils so dilated that only the rim of the iris is visible
Bone or Joint	not	mild diffuse	patient reports	-	patient is	-

aches if patient was having pain previously, only the additional component attributed to opiates withdrawal is scored	present	discomfort	severe diffuse aching of joints/muscles		rubbing joints or muscles and is unable to sit still because of discomfort	
Runny nose or tearing Not accounted for by cold - symptoms or allergies	not present	nasal stuffiness or unusually moist eyes	nose running or tearing	-	nose constantly running or tears streaming down cheeks	-
GI Upset: over last 1/2 hour	no GI symptoms	stomach cramps	nausea or loose stool	vomiting or diarrhea	-	multiple episodes of diarrhea or vomiting
Tremor observation of outstretched hands	no tremor	tremor can be felt, but not observed	slight tremor observable	-	gross tremor or muscle twitching	-
Yawning Observation during assessment	no yawning	yawning once or twice during assessment	yawning three or more times during assessment	-	yawning several times/minute	-
Anxiety or Irritability	none	patient reports increasing irritability or anxiousness	patient obviously irritable or anxious	-	patient so irritable or anxious that participation in the assessment is difficult	-
Gooseflesh skin	skin is smooth	-	-	piloerection of skin can be felt or hairs standing up on arms	-	prominent piloerection

4. Total Score: _____ Initials of person completing assessment: _____

Scoring and Source (Office Use Only):

Scoring:

- Score: 5-12 = mild
- 13-24 = moderate
- 25-36 = moderately severe
- More than 36 = severe withdrawal

Developer:

Wesson, D. R., and Ling, W. developed the Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale (COWS) in 2003.