

Patient	Date and time	Reason for assessment	Rater initials
---------	---------------	-----------------------	----------------

For each item, mark the score that best describes the patient's signs or symptoms. Rate on just the apparent relationship to opiate withdrawal. If heart rate is increased because the patient was exercising just prior to assessment, for example, the increased pulse rate would not add to the score.

RESTING PULSE RATE

Measured after patient is sitting or lying for one minute.

- ☐ 0 pulse rate 80 or below
- ☐ 1 pulse rate 81–100
- ☐ 2 pulse rate 101–120
- ☐ 4 pulse rate greater than 120

RESTLESSNESS

Observation 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 or arms
- ☐ 5 unable to sit still for more than a few seconds

BONE OR JOINT ACHES

If patient was having pain previously, only the additional component attributed to opiate withdrawal is scored.

- ☐ 0 not present
- ☐ 1 mild diffuse discomfort
- ☐ 2 patient reports severe diffuse aching of joints or muscles
- ☐ 4 patient is rubbing joints or muscles and is unable to sit still because of discomfort

GI UPSET

Over last half hour.

- ☐ 0 no GI symptoms
- ☐ 1 stomach cramps
- ☐ 2 nausea or loose stool
- ☐ 3 vomiting or diarrhea
- ☐ 5 multiple episodes of diarrhea or vomiting

YAWNING

Observation during assessment.

- ☐ 0 no yawning
- ☐ 1 yawning once or twice during assessment
- ☐ 2 yawning three or more times during assessment
- ☐ 4 yawning several times a minute

GOOSEFLESH SKIN

- ☐ 0 skin is smooth
- ☐ 3 piloerection of skin can be felt or hairs standing up on arms
- ☐ 5 prominent piloerection

SWEATING

Over past half hour, not accounted for by room temperature or patient 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

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

RUNNY NOSE OR TEARING

Not accounted for by cold symptoms 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

TREMOR

Observation of outstretched hands.

- ☐ 0 no tremor
- ☐ 1 tremor can be felt, but not observed
- ☐ 2 slight tremor observable
- ☐ 4 gross tremor or muscle twitching

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

TOTAL SCORE

Maximum possible score 48

INTERPRETATION

- | | |
|-------|------------------------------|
| 5–12 | Mild withdrawal |
| 13–24 | Moderate withdrawal |
| 25–36 | Moderately severe withdrawal |
| 37+ | Severe withdrawal |

Induction timing follows local protocol. Buprenorphine induction is commonly withheld until objective withdrawal is present, often cited in the 8 to 12 range, because dosing too early risks precipitated withdrawal. Use your facility's protocol for the induction threshold. The bands above are the published severity categories, not an induction order.

Documentation. Record the COWS score and time immediately before the first dose. The score at induction is the clinical justification a reviewer looks for, and serial scores support the level of care billed.