




Addiction Medicine is Family Medicine—Nicotine, Alcohol, and Opioids

- ▶ **ASK** all appropriate patients if they currently smoke, drink alcohol, or use opioids, or if they have in the past
- ▶ **ASSESS** each substance for the quantity and frequency of use and the method of intake
- ▶ **ADVISE** the patient about the harms and consequences of use
- ▶ **ASSIST** by offering treatment options in the form of pharmacotherapy and behavioural interventions
- ▶ **ARRANGE** a follow-up visit if the patient accepts assistance; if the patient declines assistance, follow up at the next visit

	 Nicotine	 Alcohol	 Opioids
First line pharmacotherapy	Varenicline – oral	Naltrexone – oral	Buprenorphine – sublingual
Mechanism of action	Partial agonist/antagonist at nicotine AchR.	Opioid antagonist that inhibits euphoria associated with alcohol use.	Partial agonist/antagonist at the opioid receptor.
Dosing	Start 1 – 4 wks prior to the quit date. 0.5 mg/d for 3 d, then 0.5 mg orally twice daily for 4 d, then 1 mg orally twice daily for 11 wks. Sustained abstinence is increased with longer treatment.	25 mg/d for 3 d, then increase to 50 mg/d thereafter. Maximum dose is 150 mg/d in single or divided doses for 3 – 12 months.	Day 1: 2 – 4 mg sublingual 12 hours from last opioid use or in moderate withdrawal (COWS scale > 12). Reassess in one hour and repeat doses every hour up to 12 mg until symptoms improve. Day 2: Total dose of day 1. Day 3, onward: Increase by 2 – 4 mg/d for ongoing withdrawal symptoms.
Common side effects	Nausea and vivid dreams.	GI upset.	Nausea, pruritus, constipation.
Contra-indications	Allergy, pregnancy, breastfeeding.	Patients on opioids, as it will cause withdrawal.	Allergy. Caution in cirrhosis and with concurrent sedative use.
Clinical pearls	Can be combined with other smoking cessation therapies such as nicotine replacement therapy or bupropion.	Monitor liver enzymes while on treatment.	Precipitated withdrawal may occur. Treat symptomatically and continue induction when the patient is ready.

For a list of all approved therapies and to view the full primer booklet, go to <https://cutt.ly/practical-approach-to-substance-use-disorders-ENG> or scan the QR code.

