

Methadone Saves Lives.

Health Care Professionals and Methadone Maintenance Treatment

- Treatment
- Counselling
- Support

Opioid addiction: A real problem in Ontario

An estimated 30,000 people in Ontario have an opioid addiction. Dealing with this issue requires resources, patience and care.

Many of us, including pharmacists, nurses and doctors, are not comfortable talking about opioid addiction and treatment.

While the roots of the problem are complex, the facts speak for themselves. This isn't just about heroin. The majority of people currently seeking treatment for opioid addiction are using prescription medications, obtained either legally or illegally. Many who experience opioid addiction are reluctant to seek help; those who do often fail to get the treatment and support they need.



Commonly misused prescription drugs

- **oxycodone**
(e.g., Percocet)
- **codeine**
(e.g., Tylenol #3, Tylenol #1)
- **morphine**
- **hydromorphone** (e.g., Dilaudid)
- **meperidine** (e.g., Demerol)

“Opioid dependence is a growing problem in our communities and our practices. As health professionals, we need to respond”

Peter Selby, MBBS, CCFP
Chief of Addictions, CAMH

MMT: A proven method of care

Methadone maintenance treatment is a medically recognized pharmacotherapy that, when combined with counselling and other psychosocial supports, is the gold standard treatment for opioid addiction.

Methadone is a long-acting opioid that helps manage cravings and alleviates symptoms of withdrawal. That means people on methadone are less inclined to resort to risky or criminal behaviour in order to satisfy their addiction.

Methadone maintenance treatment helps patients return to healthy and productive lives.

“Naturally, communities are concerned about issues of open drug use that create unsafe neighbourhoods. Methadone offers a solution to these issues”

Rob Boyd, Director, Oasis Clinic, Ottawa

Is methadone right for my patients?

MMT is a viable and proven treatment for opioid addiction, but it's not for everyone. As with all medical treatments, patients need to be assessed to determine if it is the right treatment for them.

Who can prescribe methadone?

In order to prescribe methadone for opioid addiction, physicians must be approved by Health Canada, on the recommendation of their provincial licensing body. In Ontario this requires the completion of approved training offered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Who can dispense methadone?

Any pharmacy can dispense methadone provided that the methadone policy outlined by the Ontario College of Pharmacists is followed. Methadone training is highly recommended for all pharmacists, and is required for the pharmacy manager and at least one staff pharmacist.

“The perception of the scary client who doesn't get better simply isn't true.

I can see changes in people very quickly after they start on the program”

Dr. Lisa Bromley
Sandy Hill Community
Health Centre, Ottawa

Methadone maintenance treatment (MMT) is a safe and effective program for managing opioid addiction – a complex and serious health and social challenge.

Visit MethadoneSavesLives.ca and consider MMT for patients dealing with opioid addiction issues.

Methadone: FAQs

Will methadone make my patients high?

At a therapeutic oral dose, methadone does not produce the euphoric feeling of being high.

Isn't methadone just replacing one addiction with another?

Think of methadone as a potential treatment option – the same way you would consider any other medication. The right dosage, combined with support and counselling, eliminates physical withdrawal symptoms and allows patients to lead a stable life. Those with an opioid addiction deserve treatment as much as any other patient.

If I prescribe methadone, will I have more “problem patients” in my practice?

Methadone is a legal, safe prescription drug that is administered orally at a pharmacy. Patients taking methadone have fewer or no physical cravings and can access methadone in a safe, controlled environment rather than obtaining drugs illegally.

How long will my patients need to take methadone?

The length of time a patient remains on methadone depends on the individual. Some patients may be able to taper off; others may remain in methadone treatment for many years.

Are there other treatments for opioid addiction?

Yes, addiction counselling and support groups such as Narcotics Anonymous are options to consider. Buprenorphine (marketed as Suboxone in Canada) is another medication used in opioid substitution treatment.

Where can my patients find information about other mental health or addiction problems?

Visit www.camh.net for links to information.

Methadone Maintenance Treatment.

MMT isn't just used to treat people who are dependent on heroin. In fact, more and more people in Ontario turn to methadone to treat an addiction to prescription painkillers.

A few years ago I got into trouble with drugs. It was a tough time –I was going through a nasty divorce and was very depressed. The good news is I got through it, thanks to counselling and methadone. Now I have a job and a good support system. My boss even covers for me when I have to pick up my take-home doses every week. It hasn't been easy, but I can honestly say things are looking up.

Kelly, on MMT for 2 years

I experimented with drugs in my late teens. Before I knew it I was hooked on pills and in way over my head. When I finally did seek help, I was told to quit cold turkey. Big mistake. Fortunately, I found a treatment that helped me: counselling and methadone. I've got my life back.

Catherine, on MMT for 4 years

It hasn't been easy getting the methadone I need to stay clean. I've hitchhiked through snowstorms and worse. One doctor thought I was just trying to get high. But I'm one of the lucky ones. Now I've got a clinic in my neighbourhood and I'm counselling teens.

Sam, on MMT for 3 years

Since I started on methadone, I've been free of the crushing physical and mental burden of using illegal drugs. I feel better, I look better – I'm even playing hockey with my son again.

Tony, 36, on MMT for 6 years

My reward has been the chance to enjoy my family, to find employment, to have good health in my mind and body and to be in control, for once, of my own happiness.

Margaret, 51, on MMT for 11 years

The whole stereotype that surrounds methadone prevents so many people from getting involved. People need to know that methadone is okay, that it works.

Beth, 42, on MMT for 4 years



Training and Support.

The first step towards being qualified to prescribe or dispense methadone is completing an approved course offered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Opioid Dependence Treatment

Core Course

This 12-hour accredited course consists of:

- five self-directed online tutorials
- a one-day classroom course.

A comprehensive certificate program is also available and consists of the core course plus several electives.

Health care professionals with an MMT caseload have access to consultation and ongoing support by calling:

Addiction Clinical Consultation Service

1 888 720-2227 or 416 595-6968 in the Toronto area.

Staff will assess your query and the appropriate consultant (medical, psychosocial or pharmacy) will return your call. Hours of operation: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday to Friday.

For information, support and resources, visit:

Methadone Saves Lives.ca

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