

Opioid Agonist Therapy



Opioid agonist therapy (OAT) is a way to support people in achieving their health and well-being goals with the help of medication. For some, the goal may be to stop using opioids completely. For others, it may be to reduce their use. Get to know the facts about OAT.

What is OAT?

OAT are life-saving, safe and effective medications for people living with an opioid use disorder. It can be dangerous to stop using opioids abruptly without OAT. It is a first-line treatment for opioid use disorder.

OAT can be prescribed in specialized clinics, primary care settings and even some emergency departments. Pharmacists play an important role in dispensing medication, as well as offering support through education and monitoring.

How Does OAT Help People?

OAT can increase a person's chances of reaching their health goals safely and provides an opportunity to access counselling, psychotherapy and other supportive services.

OAT helps reduce cravings, withdrawal symptoms and the risk of overdose and death by 50 per cent.

Receiving OAT improves quality of life and is linked to higher rates of employment, better engagement in family and community, and improved mental health.

Studies found that longer-term OAT (longer than one year) improves health outcomes and helps people achieve their substance use health goals (including reduced or no opioid use).

How Does OAT Help Communities?

OAT reduces costs to the healthcare, social, welfare and justice systems.



This document is part of a series of [evidence briefs](#) created by the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction to help people and communities understand and contextualize complex health solutions and the resources intended to address people's substance use health and wellness. Other topics in this series: [supervised consumption sites](#) and [drug checking](#).