



Coming off psychiatric medication (2021)

Explains why you might decide to come off psychiatric medication, how to do this safely and where you can go for support. Also includes tips for friends and family wanting to support someone who is coming off medication.

If you require this information in Word document format for compatibility with screen readers, please email: publications@mind.org.uk.

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Deciding to come off psychiatric medication

Avoid stopping medication suddenly

It's best to reduce your dose gradually. Stopping medications suddenly (going cold turkey) can make [withdrawal symptoms](#) worse, and for some medications can be dangerous. It's important to get more medication in advance so that you don't have to stop suddenly.

If you're running out of medication and need an urgent prescription:

- contact [NHS 111 \(England\)](#) or [NHS 111 \(Wales\)](#), who may be able to arrange for you to see a doctor or collect an emergency prescription
- contact your GP surgery and ask for an [emergency appointment](#)
- contact your local [crisis team](#) (CRHT), if you're under their care.

See the NHS website for more information about [getting an urgent prescription](#).

Why might I want to come off medication?

Medication helps some people, but it isn't always right for others. If you don't find your medication helpful, you may wish to stop taking it. Or you may find it helps your mental health, but wish to stop for other reasons. For example:

- the side effects are more of a problem than any benefits you have found from taking it
- you don't like the way medication affects you or how it makes you feel
- your medication is stopping you from doing things you want to do
- you don't like the idea of staying on medication long-term
- you've been advised by someone you trust to come off your medication because it's not safe, for example due to side effects or a change in your symptoms
- you've found other ways of coping or other treatments that help, which you feel are enough
- your mental health has been consistently better for long enough that you feel you might not need the medication any more.

Depending on your circumstances you may pay for your own prescriptions or you may get them for free. If you are thinking of coming off a medication because you can't afford it, there might be help available. See our resource on [money and mental health](#) for more information.

Is coming off medication right for me?

The decision to come off medication is a personal one based on what feels right for you in your particular circumstances.

After weighing up the advantages and disadvantages, you might feel that now is a good time to start coming off your medication. Or that you want to come off it in future but it's not the right time just now.

Alternatively you might decide that your goal is to reduce your medication to a dosage that feels better for you rather than stopping completely, or that the medication is helping and you want to keep taking it.

It's about deciding what's best for you at the moment, and remembering that what helps may change over time.

"My current doctor is great, and has always said that it is up to me if I take the medication or not, which makes me feel a lot better about it as I feel more in control."

How do I start coming off medication?

Before starting to come off your medication it's important to get medical advice and make a plan. For example:

Get support

It's important to get support before you start coming off. For example from your doctor, your mental health team or people with experience of coming off similar drugs. For more information see our sections on [support services](#) and [useful contacts](#).

Plan to come off slowly

To come off your medication safely with less risk of relapse it is important to taper (slowly reduce) your dose. See our section on [planning for withdrawal](#) for more information, including useful tips on [how to taper](#).

Know your rights

Whether to continue or stop taking medication is usually your decision. The [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\)](#), the organisation that writes the guidelines on best practice in health care, say that:

- you have the right to be involved in decisions about medicines, so you can make an informed choice about your treatment

- you have the right to refuse a medication or to stop taking it, even if your doctor thinks this might make your mental health problem worse.

If you've agreed to take medication in the past you also have the right to change your mind. See our resources on [your right to refuse medication](#) and [being actively involved in your treatment](#) for more information.

Could I be forced to stay on medication?

Generally it's your right to choose whether you come off medication, but there are some situations where your right to choose may be affected. For example, if:

- you are [sectioned](#) (detained) under some sections of the [Mental Health Act](#)
- you don't have [capacity](#) to decide whether to have treatment
- it's emergency life-saving treatment.

See our resource on [consent to treatment](#) for more information, including advice on how to get help making your voice heard.

"For me, coming off medication really benefited me. I felt like I was more in control of my emotions, as I was better able to identify what my 'triggers' were. On medication it was a lot harder to realise what made me feel worse, and what helped."

How can I plan for withdrawal?

Before coming off medication, it's important to make sure you have all the information and support you need to do it safely.

This section covers some things you may want to consider when planning your withdrawal. You could also revisit these tips during withdrawal.

My experience of coming off medication

"I would've liked more information and support when I did make the decision to come off my medication, especially about the side effects of withdrawal."

[Read Andy's story](#)

Find out about your medication

It can help to know as much as possible about any medication you're planning to stop taking. For example, if it's likely to cause particular [withdrawal symptoms](#). It could help if you:

- **Read the Patient Information Leaflet (PIL).** You can read the paper leaflet that comes with your medication, look in our [A-Z of psychiatric drugs](#) or search on the [electronic Medicines Compendium \(eMC\)](#) – all PILs are available on this site and you should look for the particular form and dose you've been prescribed. If there is something in the information leaflet that you don't understand you can ask your pharmacist or health professional to explain what this means.
- **Talk to a pharmacist.** You can ask them questions about medication without needing to make an appointment. For example, you could ask if different forms or doses might be available (such as changing from a [depot injection](#) or getting tablets in smaller amounts), so you have an idea of what could be possible to ask your doctor.
- **Try peer support.** It could help to ask other people about their experiences of coming off medication and what they found helpful. This won't tell you exactly what to expect as experiences vary from person to person even if you're taking the same drug, but it could give you some general tips and insight. For more information see [support services](#), and read our information on [peer support](#) and [online mental health](#).

When searching for information on the internet, remember that some information about medication may be misleading or wrong. So be careful and make sure the information you read is written by a source you trust.

Don't stop suddenly

Many people find that they become unwell if they stop taking medication suddenly. This is sometimes called 'going cold turkey'.

It's not possible to tell who will be affected, so it's always advised that you slowly reduce your medication very slowly over a period of time. This is sometimes called [tapering](#). Going slowly down to the dose you want to get to will give your mind and your body time to adjust to being without it.

"It's important to do it gradually. Whenever I've suddenly stopped taking my medication, I end up feeling horrible and just back at square one."

The main risks of stopping suddenly are:

- you are more likely to experience withdrawal symptoms
- your original mental health problems are more likely to return or get worse
- it can be dangerous for your physical health.

"Unfortunately going 'cold turkey' has for the most part been absolutely catastrophic and in the last instance ended up with me taking the highest level of completely new medications."

Coming off valproate

Different medications carry different risks. It can be **very dangerous to stop taking valproate suddenly**, so it's really important to talk to your doctor before trying to come off it.

A doctor should only prescribe you valproate if you can make sure that you won't become pregnant, through a pregnancy prevention programme. If you are taking valproate and think you could be pregnant, visit your doctor as soon as you can to get support.

See our resource on [valproate](#) for more information, including what to do if you want to stop taking valproate.

Some drugs are particularly dangerous to stop suddenly if you have been taking them for more than a couple of months. These include [clozapine](#) (an antipsychotic), [lithium](#) and [benzodiazepine tranquillisers](#) among others.

Choose a good time to start

Coming off medication can sometimes be difficult and, if so, it may be harder to do other things at the same time. It might help to think about when to start to withdraw. For example, it might help if you:

- wait until after any big changes or events you know are coming up
- try to re-arrange stressful activities for another time, if you can
- choose a time when you have enough other support in place.

Often there won't be an ideal time to start coming off, but you might be able to think of times when it could be easier. For tips on looking after yourself during this time, see our section on [self-care during withdrawal](#).

"I felt like a failure the first time I attempted withdrawal. It just wasn't the right time. Be kind to yourself, be patient. Deciding to try it in winter was definitely a huge mistake! Longer days, sunshine and fresh air made all the difference."

Talk to your GP or health care team

If you're thinking of coming off medication, it's always a good idea to talk to your doctor or health care team about why you want to stop, how you can do this safely and what additional support they may be able to offer to help you.

Health professionals have a duty to support you with decisions you make about your treatment, even if they had previously advised you against stopping. This includes supporting you with coming off your medication safely.

You can ask them about how to reduce it and any changes they could make to your prescription. For example, if smaller doses or a liquid alternative of your medication are available.

Your GP can also help you cope with any [withdrawal symptoms](#) you experience, or suggest alternative treatments you could try. It can be helpful to book several GP appointments during the planned withdrawal period so that you can check in regularly with your doctor.

"With the GP's advice I started to reduce the dose over time. I had more information about possible withdrawal symptoms this time. I experienced brain zaps, exhaustion, and feeling more anxious, but these symptoms subsided after a fortnight."

Make a tapering plan

How you reduce your medication will differ depending on your medication and your own individual circumstances, which your doctor can advise on. In general though it will be important to **reduce your dose slowly over time**, by gradually taking smaller and smaller doses. This is called a tapering plan.

It can help to write down your plan with timeframes showing the dates when you'll reduce your dose, by how much, and for how long. If you have a mobile phone, you may find the calendar function a useful way to plan your taper. Whichever method you use, you can adjust and change this as you go along depending on how you're feeling, but having a plan in place at the start can help reassure you and give you an idea of what you're aiming for.

Taking smaller doses at the same regular intervals is generally safer than taking a larger dose and waiting longer until the next one. If you leave more time between doses, it can make chemicals fluctuate too much in your body and you may feel unwell.

Ask your doctor, pharmacist or whoever normally prescribes your medication for help planning how best to reduce your dose. For example:

Consider cutting or filing your tablets into smaller doses

It can help to try cutting or filing your tablets into smaller doses. There are a few ways to do this. You may use a pill-cutter, which you can get at some pharmacies. Or if this doesn't allow you to cut off small enough pieces, some people find that using a small file, like a nail file, to shave a bit more off the tablet every day helps them to reduce their dose at a speed that feels safest and most manageable.

Your doctor should be able to advise you on what to try, including whether this approach is effective with your specific type of medication (cutting or filing doesn't always work with slow-release medications).

Consider asking for a liquid form of your tablets

Some people find that liquid forms of tablets are helpful for coming off at a manageable and safe pace, as they allow you to drop down to lower doses slowly and sometimes more precisely than by cutting tablets. Liquid forms of tablets can be more expensive to produce so are not available for all medications though, so speak to your doctor to find out if this is an option for you.

For more advice on how to take smaller doses by tablet or liquid form, speak to your GP, pharmacist or health care team. You may also find some of the organisations listed in our [useful contacts](#) can help you with this too.

"I have started and stopped medication many times. After the first time I was very careful with the antipsychotics and slowly tapered down whilst doing CBT. The psychotic episodes haven't come back since."

Could pharmaceutical companies actually help us come off medication?

[Read James's story](#)

See our [useful contacts](#) section for a list of organisations that can help you learn about and plan for withdrawal, including opportunities to hear from people who have gone through it.

Give yourself time

How long you need is different for everyone, and will partly depend on how long you've been taking your medication, the dose you take and the 'half-life'. The half-life is how quickly the drug starts to leave your body. See our resource on [half-lives](#) for a more detailed explanation and further information.

While it is sometimes possible to withdraw over a few weeks, it can be safer to do so over several months so that your body has a good amount of time to adjust. For some people who have been on medication for many years, withdrawing very slowly over a few years can also be helpful.

Going very slowly is not only safer but can also help to reassure you if you are anxious about what it will be like to come off your medication, because it can give you a chance to adjust and see how you feel at lower doses.

"Life situations have a lot to do with how badly you respond to withdrawal. One time my tapering coincided with exams. I thought I could handle it (just wanted to get it over with) but it was too much stress. Waiting for a time where you aren't expecting to be under a lot of stress is always a good idea!"

Come off one medication at a time

Which drug to reduce first will depend on what they are prescribed for, and how long you have been taking them.

Medications often affect how other medications work, so if you're coming off one medication while also taking others your doctor might need to adjust your other doses to allow for how they affect each other.

Tell people close to you

It could help to tell friends or family that you are planning to come off your medication. This might help them to understand what you're going through, and why you might seem different. You could also tell them how you would prefer to be supported if things become difficult.

You might find that they don't understand why you want to stop taking medication, or that they disagree with your decision. It might help to talk together about their concerns, and to show them our information for [friends and family](#).

Plan ahead for difficult times

It could help to think about what you could do if things become really difficult, for example if you're experiencing severe [withdrawal symptoms](#) or the symptoms of your mental health problem come back.

Planning for a crisis or a difficult time can feel scary, but it's a good idea to have things in place for if you need them. It can be reassuring for you and for those supporting you. You might also consider making an [advance decision](#).

If you become unwell while tapering down your medication, it is ok to change your mind and decide to stay on if you feel that actually this isn't the right time for you to go through withdrawal. See our [planning for a crisis](#) resource for lots of ideas to help you plan ahead.

Could I be forced to stay on medication?

Generally it's your right to choose whether you come off medication, but there are some situations where your right to choose may be affected. For example, if:

- you are [sectioned](#) (detained) under some sections of the [Mental Health Act](#)
- you don't have [capacity](#) to decide whether to have treatment
- it's emergency life-saving treatment.

See our resource on [consent to treatment](#) for more information, including advice on how to get help making your voice heard.

What are withdrawal symptoms?

You may experience withdrawal symptoms (sometimes called withdrawal effects) while you're [tapering](#) or after stopping medication.

If you're experiencing severe withdrawal symptoms and need urgent help, see our resource on [getting help in a crisis](#). If you need to help someone else urgently, see our resource on [helping someone else in an emergency](#).

Will I get withdrawal symptoms?

Some people experience withdrawal symptoms and some don't. They can be very different person to person, lasting only a short time for some and a long time for others. It's not possible to tell who might get withdrawal symptoms when coming off medication, as it depends on many factors, including the type of medication you are on.

Withdrawal symptoms can sometimes be more likely if your medication has a short half-life, which means how quickly the drug starts to leave your body. See our resource on [half-lives](#) for more information.

You are also more likely to experience withdrawal symptoms if you have been taking your medication for a long time, or withdraw from it too quickly.

"From the first day I reduced the dose I started having brain zaps."

What type of withdrawal symptoms might I get?

The type of withdrawal symptoms you might get varies depending on the medication you're taking, and the type of drug it is. [Find out about your medication](#) for some starting points, and see our resources on different types of medication for more details:

- [antidepressants](#)
- [antipsychotics](#)
- [lithium and other mood stabilisers](#)
- [sleeping pills and minor tranquillisers](#).

"One of my main symptoms of anxiety is derealisation, and I also experienced this when starting and coming off medication, which isn't often talked about."

Am I having withdrawal symptoms or a relapse of my original illness?

It can sometimes be difficult to tell if you're experiencing withdrawal symptoms or if your mental health problem is returning or getting worse.

While it's different for different people, withdrawal symptoms often happen soon after you start to come off your medication and are sometimes different to symptoms or difficulties you've had before.

What could help with withdrawal symptoms?

Coping with withdrawal symptoms can be difficult, but there are things you can do that might help. You could:

- **Talk to your doctor.** They may be able to adjust your dose, or prescribe other medications to help with withdrawal symptoms you're experiencing. You can ask your GP about this regardless of whether it was your GP or a psychiatrist who prescribed the medication you're reducing.
- **Ask if you can switch medication.** You could also ask your doctor about changing to a different drug that is easier to taper down from. For example if you're taking a drug with a short [half-life](#), it could help to switch to another drug with a longer half-life, as this can reduce withdrawal symptoms.
- **Reduce your dose more slowly.** It can be really discouraging if you get withdrawal symptoms, but this doesn't mean you won't be able to come off. It can sometimes help to take things more slowly than originally planned, or to stay at the same dose for longer before going down to a lower dose.

For more suggestions on looking after yourself and getting support, including if you're experiencing withdrawal symptoms, see our sections on [self-care during withdrawal](#) and [support services during withdrawal](#).

You can report any withdrawal symptoms you experience to the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) using the Yellow Card scheme .
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This helps health professionals to collect information about all the ways people respond to medication, to make it as safe as it can be for people to use.

How can I look after myself as I come off?

Coping while coming off medication can be hard, but there are lots of things you can do that might help. This section suggests some things you could try while coming off. For more tips that you could put in place before coming off your medication, see our section on [planning for withdrawal](#).

Talk to someone

It can be hard to reach out, but it's important to share what you're going through. If you don't feel you can talk to the people around you, you could try contacting a helpline. For example, you can talk to Samaritans for free on 116 123 or jo@samaritans.org. For more options see our resource on [helplines and listening services](#).

Keep a mood diary

Recording details of your medication and mood in a diary could help you remember helpful details. For example, when you started tapering your medication, what doses you've taken and when, and the effect of different doses on your mood. This may help you notice any patterns or early signs that things are becoming more difficult for you.

You could also try monitoring your mood using an online tool or app. The [NHS apps library](#) has a list of apps that you can use to support your mental health and track your mood.

Make a self-care box

Many people find that when they are feeling unwell their thinking can get confused and they struggle to make decisions or come up with ideas for what can help them feel better. For this reason it can be really helpful to put together a box of things when you are feeling ok that might help you when you are in a difficult patch. For example, you could include:

- favourite books, films or music
- a stress ball or fiddle toy
- helpful sayings or notes of encouragement

- pictures or photos you find comforting
- a soft blanket or cosy slippers
- a nice-smelling candle or lavender bag
- anything that is comforting to you or helps you to distract yourself.

Try other treatments

Other types of treatment could help you cope during withdrawal. For example, you may want to try talking therapy and counselling, arts or creative therapies, or complementary and alternative therapies. See our resource on [alternatives to psychiatric medication](#) for more information on these.

Be open to changing your plans

Coming off medication isn't something you can 'succeed' or 'fail' at, it's more about what is best for you at a particular moment in your life. For example, you might find you need to reduce more slowly, or stay at one dose for longer than you had planned. Try to remember that coming off medication can be a very slow process involving a number of steps and adjustments.

If withdrawing from medication isn't going as well as you'd hoped, this can feel really disappointing. But this doesn't mean you won't be able to come off in the future if this is still what you want.

It's also important to remember that you can change your mind about coming off. You don't have to keep withdrawing after you've started.

Look after your emotional wellbeing

- **Look after your stress levels.** It can help to think of ways to manage pressure and build your emotional resilience. See our resources on [how to manage stress](#) for more information.
- **Try relaxation techniques.** Learning to relax can help you look after your wellbeing when you are feeling stressed, anxious or busy. See our resources on [relaxation](#) for tips you could try.
- **Spend time in nature.** Being outside in green space can help you feel more in touch with your surroundings. See our resources on [nature and mental health](#) for more information.

Look after your physical health

- **Prioritise sleep.** Sleep can give you the energy to cope with difficult feelings and experiences so prioritising getting enough sleep can make a big difference to your health. See our resources on [coping with sleep problems](#) for more information.

- **Eat regular healthy meals.** Eating regularly and choosing foods that release energy slowly keeps your blood sugar stable, which can make a big difference to your mood and energy levels. See our resources on [food and mood](#) for more information.
- **Do some physical activity.** Exercise can be really helpful for your mental wellbeing. See our resources on [physical activity](#) for more information, including ideas to try if you have mobility problems.
- **Avoid drugs and alcohol.** It's especially important that you don't try to use recreational drugs or alcohol to replace your medication. While they may numb difficult feelings temporarily, they will make you feel a lot worse in the long term and prevent you being able to come off your medication safely. See our resources on [recreational drugs and alcohol](#) for more information.

Where can I get support to come off medication?

If you're thinking about coming off your medication there are a few people and places that can help. You might find that some of these are more suitable for you, or more easily available where you live.

Your GP

If you're thinking of coming off your medication, it's important to ask your GP or the doctor who usually prescribes your medication:

- [how to taper](#) (slowly reduce) your medication safely
- if it might help to switch to another medication that is easier to withdraw from
- if they would recommend any other medications that could help with any [withdrawal symptoms](#) you may have.

Some GPs know more about tapering off psychiatric medication than others. If you are unsure of how to start a conversation with your GP, it can help to show them our [planning for withdrawal](#) information and ask them for advice on how to taper your medication in a way that feels safe and manageable for you.

You can also ask your GP for help with withdrawal symptoms whether or not they're involved in prescribing the medication you're withdrawing from. See our resource on [talking to your GP](#) for more information.

"My GP took the possibility of withdrawal symptoms very seriously. He gave me the confidence that I could manage the reduction myself and helped me with practical issues about how a very gradual reduction of medication can be administered."

You have a right to have a say in your treatment

Your doctor or health care team should listen to your wishes about medication, but it isn't always easy to make sure this happens.

Our resources on [making yourself heard](#) and [facing and overcoming barriers](#) have some suggestions for you, and our information on [your right to refuse medication](#) may also be helpful.

Pharmacists

You can visit any pharmacy and ask to speak to a pharmacist about medication, without making an appointment. You can often ask to talk in a private room if you prefer this. See the NHS website for information about [how your pharmacy can help](#), and search for [pharmacies in England](#) or [pharmacies in Wales](#).

Your community mental health team

If you are under the care of your local [community mental health team \(CMHT\)](#), your care coordinator or community psychiatric nurse may be able to provide extra support if you are coming off your medication or changing dosage.

Your counsellor or therapist

Unlike GPs and psychiatrists, counsellors and therapists are not usually trained to provide support specifically with coming off medication, but they can help you manage the feelings and thoughts you experience while you are coming off.

See our resources on [talking therapy and counselling](#) for more information, including advice on [how to find a therapist](#).

Peer support

Peer support brings together people with similar experiences. Your peers can:

- support you and listen to how you're feeling
- offer empathy and understanding
- share experiences, information, suggestions for self-care and support options.

See our [useful contacts](#) section for a list of organisations that can help, and our sections on [peer support](#) and [online mental health](#).

How sharing my experience with others has helped my anxiety

"I know that this is a group of friends I'll have for many years to come. I hope that we'll continue to support one another through new stages of our lives."

[Read Zara's story](#)

Charity and community organisations

There are many national and local charities which offer various support services, including some organisations that support people with coming off medication. See our [useful contacts](#) and our [third sector services](#) resources for more information.

"Whatever you do, whether you choose to stay on or come off, don't go through it alone. You might feel alone at times, but there is an intricate web of people who are so connected to you, you just have to reach out to them."

Recovery colleges

Recovery colleges offer courses about mental health and recovery where you can learn with other people who are going through similar things.

Many of the courses are run during the day rather than evening so can be particularly helpful if you are unable to work and need an opportunity to learn skills and connect with others in a supportive environment.

See the [Mind Recovery Net](#) website for more information and to search for local providers.

What alternatives to medication are there?

Some people find alternatives to psychiatric medication can help, especially as a way of getting additional support while coming off medication. These include:

Talking therapy and counselling

Talking therapies and counselling give you an opportunity to talk through feelings such as:

- anxieties about whether you will be able to manage without medication
- re-adjusting to your feelings – your medication may have suppressed your emotions or creativity, so you have to learn to cope with them in other ways

- changes in your relationships, especially if people close to you are unhappy with your decisions.

See our resources on [talking therapy and counselling](#) for more information.

Arts and creative therapies

Art, music, dance, drama or writing can all be very helpful and supportive ways of expressing your feelings, as well as being a way to enjoy and distract yourself. There may be groups in your area or you may prefer to try these on your own. Groups may be quite informal or may be run by qualified therapists.

For formal therapy, you may be able to get a referral to an arts therapist through your GP or mental health team.

See our resources on [arts and creative therapies](#) for more information.

Complementary and alternative therapies

Complementary and alternative therapies take a holistic approach to your physical and mental health. This means that they consider all aspects of your physical and emotional wellbeing as a whole, rather than treating particular symptoms separately. They include activities like yoga, mindfulness, massage, aromatherapy and acupuncture.

See our resources on [complementary and alternative therapies](#) for more information.

A journey to recovery through art

"I was ruminating and over analysing every decision to such an extent that I even did it unconsciously when asleep. But when I paint I lose sense of time and the anxious thoughts are no longer there."

[Read Andy's story](#)

How can friends and family help?

This section is for friends and family of someone who is coming off, or thinking about coming off, a psychiatric medication.

You may feel nervous or worried if someone you care about is thinking of coming off their medication. It may feel difficult to know how to talk to them about it, or what support to offer. There are a few helpful things you can do though:

Try to understand

- **Ask them about their experience of taking medication.** You could ask how it affects them and why they are thinking of coming off it. Listening to their experience might help you to understand how they feel.
- **Respect their wishes.** It can be really difficult if you don't agree about what's best. If you don't agree it may be helpful to explain why, but it's important to respect their wishes and not try to take over or make decisions for them.

Ask how you and others can help

Ask what help they would find useful. This might include helping with everyday things like shopping or housework, taking them to appointments or reminding them to take a different dose of their medication.

You could also help them [make a support plan](#), which would help you to know how you can support them if they become unwell again.

Help them get support

Supporting your friend or loved one to get the support they need can make a big difference.

- Read our information on [planning for withdrawal](#) and [support services](#).
- Help them research different options for support, such as community services, local Minds or peer support groups. See our [useful contacts](#) for more information.
- Offer to go to appointments with them or to help them find an [advocate](#), if they would find this helpful.

See our resource on [helping someone else seek help](#) for more suggestions.

Try to be patient

Coming off medication can be a slow process that often involves a number of stages and adjustments. Some people will need more time than others, and some medications take longer to [taper safely](#).

While tapering is sometimes possible over a few weeks, it can take months or even years for some people to reach their medication goal, whether this be stopping completely or reducing to a particular dosage that feels better for them.

How long it takes will depend on the individual, their circumstances and the medication they are taking. It's important to be patient.

It could help if you:

- **Try to be supportive if the process is sometimes difficult.** For example if they're struggling with withdrawal effects or are unsure whether what they're experiencing is withdrawal effects or the return of their original mental health problem.
- **Understand that it could take time.** There might be a number of ups and downs before things get more stable.
- **Don't jump to conclusions.** Try not to assume they need to stay on medication if they're finding tapering difficult.

I'm worried about their decision

It can be very worrying if you're supporting someone who wants to come off medication and you disagree with their decision. It might help to talk to them about your worries, and to explore support options for yourself. You can find some suggestions below.

Our resource on [helping someone else seek help](#) has more information, including [what you can do if someone doesn't want help](#).

Look after yourself

It can be really challenging to support someone, and it's common to feel overwhelmed at times. It's important to remember to look after your own mental health too, so you have the energy, time and distance you need to be able to help your friend or family member. For example:

- **Set boundaries and don't take too much on.** If you become unwell yourself you won't be able to offer as much support. It is also important to decide what your limits are and how much you are able to help them. See our resources on [how to manage stress](#) for more information.
- **Share your caring role with others if you can.** It's often easier to support someone if you're not doing it alone.
- **Talk to others about how you're feeling.** You may want to be careful about how much information you share about the person you're supporting, but talking about your own feelings with someone you trust can help you feel supported too.

See our resources on [how to cope when supporting someone else](#) for more suggestions on what you can do, and where you can go for support.

Useful contacts

Mind's services

- [Mind's helplines](#) provide information and support by phone and email.
- [Local Minds](#) offer face-to-face services across England and Wales. These services includes talking therapies, peer support and advocacy.
- [Side by Side](#) is our supportive online community for anyone experiencing a mental health problem.

Other organisations

benzo.org.uk

benzo.org.uk

Information on benzodiazepines and Z drug sleeping pills, including addiction, withdrawal and detailed dosing schedules.

BenzoBuddies

benzobuddies.org

Support community for people wanting to withdraw from benzodiazepines.

Bipolar UK

[0333 323 3880](tel:03333233880)

bipolaruk.org

Information and support for people affected by bipolar disorder, hypomania and mania.

electronic medicines compendium (emc)

medicines.org.uk/emc

Library of information about medications, including Patient Information Leaflets (PILs) available to download.

Hearing Voices Network

hearing-voices.org

Information and support for people who hear voices or have other unshared perceptions, including local support groups.

Mad in America

madinamerica.com

Publishes articles about different aspects of psychiatric medication.

Mind Recovery Net

mindrecoverynet.org.uk

Publishes information on recovery colleges, including a searchable list of providers.

NHS 111 (England)

[111](http://111.nhs.uk)

111.nhs.uk

Non-emergency medical help and advice for people in England.

NHS 111 (Wales)

[111](http://111.wales.nhs.uk) (Hywel Dda, Powys, Aneurin Bevan and Swansea Bay (including Brigid) Health Boards)

[0845 46 47](http://08454647) (all other areas of Wales)

111.wales.nhs.uk

Non-emergency medical help and advice for people living in Wales. The contact number for this service differs depending on which area of Wales you are in.

NHS Apps Library

nhs.uk/apps-library

A directory of apps that can help you manage and support your physical and mental health.

PostScript 360

[0117 966 3629](http://01179663629)

postscript360.org.uk

Information and support for those coming off tranquillisers and sleeping pills. Formerly known as Battle Against Tranquillisers (BAT).

Recovery Road

recovery-road.org

Information about withdrawing from antidepressants and benzodiazepines.

Samaritans

[116 123](http://116123) (freephone)

jo@samaritans.org

Chris, Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK

PO Box 90 90

Stirling FK8 2SA

samaritans.org

Samaritans are open 24/7 for anyone who needs to talk. You can [visit some Samaritans branches in person](#). Samaritans also have a Welsh Language Line on [0808 164 0123](#) (7pm–11pm every day).

Seroxat & SSRI User Group

seroxatusergroup.org.uk

For people who are taking or withdrawing from paroxetine (Seroxat).

Surviving Antidepressants

survivingantidepressants.org

Online peer support for people withdrawing from antidepressants.

The Withdrawal Project

withdrawal.theinnercompass.org

Information and support for people wanting to withdraw from medication.

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References are available on request.