

Longer detox might work better for prescription pain med addiction

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Small study compared varying treatment periods used with opioid-dependent patients.

(HealthDay)—A longer period of detoxification may be more effective for people being treated for addiction to prescription painkillers called opioids, according to a small new study.

Abuse of prescription opioids such as oxycodone, hydrocodone and hydromorphone is a major public health problem in the United States. The new 12-week study, which included 70 people undergoing outpatient treatment for opioid addiction, was published online Oct. 23 in the journal *JAMA Psychiatry*.

For the first two weeks, all the patients took buprenorphine, a medication used to treat opioid addiction. They were then randomly assigned to slowly reduce the dose of buprenorphine over one, two or four weeks, followed by treatment with naltrexone, a medication that

blocks opioid strength.

Patients in the four-week group were more likely to stop abusing opioids than those in the one-week or two-week groups, according to a journal news release.

The findings suggest that some prescription opioid abusers may respond positively to outpatient treatment with [buprenorphine detoxification](#) followed by naltrexone while undergoing behavioral therapy [counseling], study authors wrote.

"Additional controlled studies are needed to better understand the parameters of efficacious treatments for [prescription [opioid](#)] dependence, as well as to identify the individuals for whom brief vs. longer-term treatments are warranted," concluded study authors Stacey Sigmon, of the University of Vermont, in Burlington, and colleagues.

More information: The U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse has more about [prescription drug abuse](#).

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