

Caregiver Support Guide

You could be a caregiver of someone who's just begun their recovery journey from opioid addiction, or a caregiver with years under your belt. No matter what the situation, you're not alone. As you read about the following ways to find support, consider the online resources and write down important names and numbers along the way.

1 Speak to healthcare professionals.

Whether you're helping a loved one find treatment, or want to find support for yourself, involving a healthcare professional is important. They can help you understand treatment options, find a treatment that's right for your loved one, and suggest options for your own wellbeing.

2 Family and friends may lend a hand.

Taking on the entire effort of caring for a loved one with opioid addiction can be exhausting. Sometimes family members and even close friends are willing to help. So, if you need a break, consider seeking help.

If the stress of caring for a loved one negatively impacts your family dynamics, consider family therapy. This approach is based on an idea that the family is a system of different parts. So, if one member struggles with opioid addiction, everyone could be affected. Talking about these painful situations may help a family as a whole to heal and find strength.

"When I needed a break as a caregiver, my family and friends kept me strong.

I benefited from people who believed in me and my adult son."

*—Dr. O'Connor, caregiver and healthcare professional**

3 Consider a faith-based community.

Support that comes from a spiritual point of view is also an option. Whether it's talking to a religious leader or joining a faith-based support group, connecting with people who have similar beliefs may create a sense of community and belonging during tough times.

*Dr. O'Connor is a paid spokesperson for Alkermes.

Please read pages 3 and 4 for **Important Safety Information** included in the Brief Summary of Important Facts about VIVITROL. Please see **Prescribing Information**, including **Medication Guide**. Please review the Medication Guide with your healthcare professional.

Resources

Healthcare Provider Locator Tool: www.vivitrol.com

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) Therapist Locator Directory: www.aamft.org

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Family Support Group: www.nami.org

Learn more at:
www.drugabuse.gov
www.nimh.nih.gov
www.samhsa.gov

Important Contacts

Name: _____

Number: _____

Name: _____

Number: _____

Name: _____

Number: _____

Name: _____

Number: _____

Name: _____

Number: _____

LET'S
change
THE
conversation.™

Brought to you by Alkermes, the maker of Vivitrol®
(naltrexone for extended-release injectable suspension)

4

Think about sharing your experience.

The stigma surrounding opioid addiction has made it difficult for some caregivers to open up about their situations. Whether it's a fear of what others might think, or simply feeling ashamed of their circumstances, overcoming this fear and sharing your experience can yield some great benefits. It may help you manage stress, reduce feelings of loneliness, or even build intimacy in relationships.

So where can you find people willing to lend an ear? It may help to investigate local support groups and social media support groups that focus on the topic of caring for loved ones battling opioid addiction. You may even consider starting a support group of your own, or look into individual counseling.

“You know who your friends are when you’re going through something like this. So I became immersed in a support group, and it helped me cope with everything that was going on in life.”

*–Vicky R., caregiver and advocate**

5

Reaching out for support may help.

When tough situations happen, some caregivers tend to pull away and try to take on too much responsibility. Try to be honest with yourself and think about how much is too much to handle. Caring for a loved one is important, but your well-being is just as valuable. In fact, teaming up with others to support a loved one may help you stay focused and avoid burnout.

“Don’t be afraid to speak up. Ask for the information you want. Find the support you need.”

*–Heidi R., advocate**

MORE LEARNING MAY BRING MORE UNDERSTANDING

Talking to a healthcare professional to better understand the ins and outs of your situation is helpful. The more you know about this chronic brain disease, the more support you may become aware of. Even sharing your experiences and learnings may help other caregivers understand their situations better.

“You have to constantly learn from your experiences. That’s what I try to do with every state that I’ve been in as a caregiver. It just gets you to the next step and gives you more understanding.”

*–Sharon Osbourne, caregiver and celebrity**

*Vicky R., Heidi R., and Sharon Osbourne are paid spokespersons of Alkermes.

Please read pages 3 and 4 for **Important Safety Information** included in the Brief Summary of Important Facts about VIVITROL. Please see **Prescribing Information**, including **Medication Guide**. Please review the Medication Guide with your healthcare professional.

What is the most important information I should know about VIVITROL?

VIVITROL can cause serious side effects, including:

1. **Risk of opioid overdose.** You can accidentally overdose in two ways.
 - VIVITROL blocks the effects of opioids, such as heroin or opioid pain medicines. **Do not** try to overcome this blocking effect by taking large amounts of opioids—this can lead to serious injury, coma, or death.
 - After you receive a dose of VIVITROL, its blocking effect slowly decreases and completely goes away over time. If you have used opioid street drugs or opioid-containing medicines in the past, using opioids in amounts that you used before treatment with VIVITROL can lead to overdose and death. You may also be more sensitive to the effects of **lower** amounts of opioids:
 - after you have gone through detoxification
 - if you miss a dose of VIVITROL
 - when your next VIVITROL dose is due
 - after you stop VIVITROL treatment

Tell your family and the people closest to you of this increased sensitivity to opioids and the risk of overdose.

2. **Severe reactions at the site of injection.** Some people on VIVITROL have had severe injection site reactions, including tissue death. Some of these reactions have required surgery. Call your healthcare provider right away if you notice any of the following at any of your injection sites:

- intense pain
- the area feels hard
- large area of swelling
- lumps
- blisters
- an open wound
- a dark scab

Tell your healthcare provider about any reaction at an injection site that concerns you, gets worse over time, or does not get better within two weeks.

3. **Sudden opioid withdrawal.** To avoid sudden opioid withdrawal, you must stop taking any type of opioid, including street drugs; prescription pain medicines; cough, cold, or diarrhea medicines that contain opioids; or opioid-dependence treatments, including buprenorphine or methadone, **for at least 7 to 14 days** before starting VIVITROL. If your healthcare professional decides that you don't need to complete detox first, he or she may give you VIVITROL in a medical facility that can treat sudden opioid withdrawal. **Sudden opioid withdrawal can be severe and may require hospitalization.**

4. **Liver damage or hepatitis.** Naltrexone, the active ingredient in VIVITROL, can cause liver damage or hepatitis. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any of these symptoms during treatment with VIVITROL:

- stomach area pain lasting more than a few days
- dark urine
- yellowing of the whites of your eyes
- tiredness

Your healthcare provider may need to stop treating you with VIVITROL if you get signs or symptoms of a serious liver problem.

What is VIVITROL?

VIVITROL is a prescription injectable medicine used to:

- treat alcohol dependence. You should stop drinking before starting VIVITROL.
- prevent relapse to opioid dependence, **after** opioid detoxification.

You must stop taking opioids before you start receiving VIVITROL. To be effective, VIVITROL must be used with other alcohol or drug recovery programs such as counseling. VIVITROL may not work for everyone. It is not known if VIVITROL is safe and effective in children.

Who should not receive VIVITROL?

Do not receive VIVITROL if you:

- are using or have a physical dependence on opioid-containing medicines or opioid street drugs, such as heroin. To test for a physical dependence on opioid-containing medicines or street drugs, your healthcare provider may give you a small injection of a medicine called naloxone. This is called a naloxone challenge test.

If you get symptoms of opioid withdrawal after the naloxone challenge test, do not start treatment with VIVITROL at that time. Your healthcare provider may repeat the test after you have stopped using opioids to see whether it is safe to start VIVITROL.

Please continue to read page 4 for **Important Safety Information** included in the Brief Summary of Important Facts about VIVITROL. Please see **Prescribing Information**, including **Medication Guide**.

Please review the Medication Guide with your healthcare professional.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF **IMPORTANT FACTS** ABOUT VIVITROL®

(NALTREXONE FOR EXTENDED-RELEASE INJECTABLE SUSPENSION)

- are having opioid withdrawal symptoms. Opioid withdrawal symptoms may happen when you have been taking opioid containing medicines or opioid street drugs regularly and then stop. **Symptoms of opioid withdrawal may include:** anxiety, sleeplessness, yawning, fever, sweating, teary eyes, runny nose, goose bumps, shakiness, hot or cold flushes, muscle aches, muscle twitches, restlessness, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, or stomach cramps.
- are allergic to naltrexone or any of the ingredients in VIVITROL or the liquid used to mix VIVITROL (diluent). See the medication guide for the full list of ingredients.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before receiving VIVITROL?

Before you receive VIVITROL, tell your healthcare provider if you:

- have liver problems, use or abuse street (illegal) drugs, have hemophilia or other bleeding problems, have kidney problems, or have any other medical conditions.
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if VIVITROL will harm your unborn baby.
- are breastfeeding. It is not known if VIVITROL passes into your milk, and if it can harm your baby. Naltrexone, the active ingredient in VIVITROL, is the same active ingredient in tablets taken by mouth that contain naltrexone. Naltrexone from tablets passes into breast milk. Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you will breastfeed or take VIVITROL. You should not do both.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Especially tell your healthcare provider if you take any opioid-containing medicines for pain, cough or colds, or diarrhea.

If you are being treated for alcohol dependence but also use or are addicted to opioid-containing medicines or opioid street drugs, it is important that you tell your healthcare provider before starting VIVITROL to avoid having sudden opioid withdrawal symptoms when you start VIVITROL treatment.

What are other possible serious side effects of VIVITROL?

VIVITROL can cause serious side effects, including:

Depressed mood. Sometimes this leads to suicide, or suicidal thoughts, and suicidal behavior. Tell your family members and people closest to you that you are taking VIVITROL.

Pneumonia. Some people receiving VIVITROL treatment have had a type of pneumonia that is caused by an allergic reaction. If this happens to you, you may need to be treated in the hospital.

Serious allergic reactions. Serious allergic reactions can happen during or soon after an injection of VIVITROL. Tell your healthcare provider or get medical help right away if you have any of these symptoms:

- skin rash
- swelling of your face, eyes, mouth, or tongue
- trouble breathing or wheezing
- chest pain
- feeling dizzy or faint

Common side effects of VIVITROL may include:

- nausea
- sleepiness
- headache
- dizziness
- vomiting
- painful joints
- decreased appetite
- muscle cramps
- cold symptoms
- trouble sleeping
- toothache

These are not all the side effects of VIVITROL. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away. You are encouraged to report all side effects to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

This is only a summary of the most important information about VIVITROL.

Need more information?

- Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist.

Read the Medication Guide, which is available at vivitrol.com and by calling 1-800-848-4876, option #1.

This Brief Summary is based on the VIVITROL Medication Guide (Rev. July 2013).

Please see [Prescribing Information](#), including [Medication Guide](#). Please review the Medication Guide with your healthcare professional.



ALKERMES and VIVITROL are registered trademarks and Let's Change the Conversation is a service mark of Alkermes, Inc. ©2018 Alkermes, Inc. All rights reserved. VIV-004137-v1 LetsChangetheConversation.com

Vivitrol[®]
(naltrexone for extended-release injectable suspension)