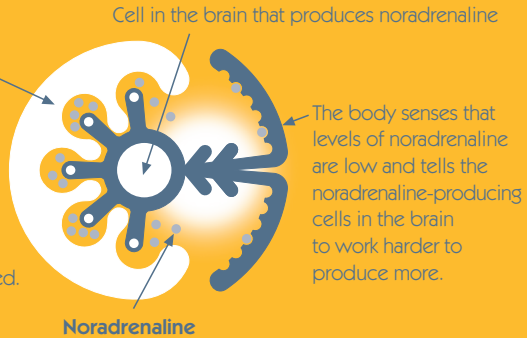


Heroin also makes it hard for the body to make a hormone called noradrenaline (see over for information on how noradrenaline works). These pictures show how Britlofex can help get noradrenaline production back to normal when you stop taking opiates.

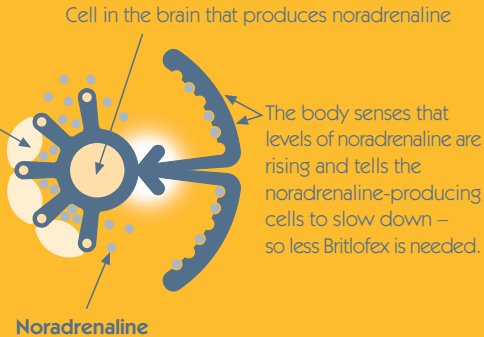
Heroin

Heroin almost completely blocks the noradrenaline-producing cells so that no matter how hard they work, only a small amount is produced.



Lofexidene (Britlofex)

Britlofex partially blocks the ability of the cells in the brain to produce noradrenaline – so levels increase.



TREATMENT CHOICES

METHADONE [PHYSEPTONE]

BUPRENORPHINE [SUBUTEX]

LOFEXIDINE [BRITLOFEX]

NALTREXONE [OPIZONE | NALOREX]

SUBOXONE [SUBUTEX + NALOXONE]

There are a number of drugs that can be prescribed to help you if you are dependent on opiates like heroin.

There is not, and never will be, a 'magic cure' that can stop everyone taking opiates. And there is no perfect long-term replacement for everyone using heroin.

However, the drug treatments, and help from the services that offer them, might be able to help you make any changes you want to make.

This leaflet is one of a series designed to help you understand what you can expect from the different drug treatments that may be on offer.

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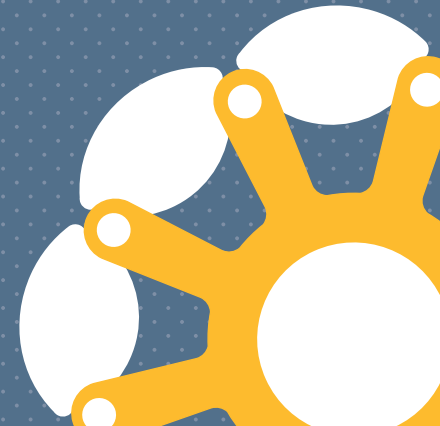
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TREATMENT CHOICES

Lofexidine
[BRITLOFEX]

DETOX



Not an opiate

Lofexidine is prescribed in the UK under the trade name **Britlofex**. Unlike the other drugs described in this series, **lofexidene does not work on the opiate receptors and so does not have any heroin-like effects.**

Britlofex can reduce the pain of detox because it can help prevent you from producing too much noradrenaline (see over the page), which is the cause of many physical withdrawal symptoms.

Noradrenaline

Noradrenaline is a 'chemical messenger' produced in a part of the brain called the Locus Coeruleus. By stimulating receptors in the body, noradrenaline helps control things like the speed food moves through the gut and the production of tears and saliva.

Opiates such as heroin and methadone reduce the amount of noradrenaline produced. This means that the Locus Coeruleus has to work really hard to produce any at all.

Low noradrenaline levels, caused by opiates, are responsible for the constipation and dry mouth that affects many people who use opiates.

If you suddenly stop taking opiates, it takes a while for the Locus Coeruleus to realise that it doesn't have to carry on working so hard, and until it does (which usually takes about 10 to 14 days), you can produce masses of noradrenaline. This causes symptoms like vomiting, diarrhoea and streaming nose.

Lofexidine can help reduce these symptoms of withdrawal by continuing to reduce the amount of noradrenaline produced. During the detox, as the lofexidine dose is reduced, the Locus Coeruleus can adjust more gradually, and get noradrenaline production back to normal levels. As a result, you will suffer fewer withdrawal symptoms.

Side effects

Britlofex can lower blood pressure (because noradrenaline helps control blood pressure), and leave you feeling faint, especially when you stand up or get out of the bath. If you get these symptoms, tell your doctor.

Britlofex can also cause a nasty metallic taste in the mouth but you can reduce this by cleaning your teeth, using mouthwashes and chewing gum.

Non-addictive

Because Britlofex does not act directly on the opiate receptors, it doesn't give any heroin-like effects at all. This, and the fact you can't develop a tolerance to it, mean that **it is non-addictive and very safe.**

The way it works means that once it is lodged in all the noradrenaline-producing cells, taking more won't improve the effect – even if you are still getting some symptoms of withdrawal.

Because it isn't working on the opiate receptors, Britlofex doesn't really help with anxiety or sleeplessness – both of which can be really hard to deal with.

Detox

How much relief it gives from withdrawal symptoms varies from person to person. However, it will make your withdrawal less severe than you would have suffered without it.

If you are sure that you are ready and able to go for a rapid detox, especially if you want or need to be free from opiates during that process, lofexidene is probably the best option.

More information

Detoxing from opiates is not easy, nor is staying off them once the detox is over. You can get a more thorough guide to detox called '**The Detox Handbook**' free from most drug services. You will find details of where to get a copy over the page.