

Post-Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (PAWS)

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Detox from an addictive substance usually involves a brief period of physical difficulty called *acute withdrawal*. This process can cause severe, even potentially fatal consequences to a person if withdrawal is not managed by experienced detox professionals. After going through the acute withdrawal phase, an additional period of persisting withdrawal symptoms occurs. This second phase of healing is called *post-acute withdrawal syndrome (PAWS)*.

What is Post Acute Withdrawal Syndrome?

Post-acute withdrawal syndrome can set in after acute withdrawal. It may persist from a few months to as long as two years. The syndrome is outwardly characterized by difficult psychological and physical symptoms. Typically, those effects require support from substance addiction treatment professionals. For the highest likelihood of lasting success, people planning to enter detox and rehab should be prepared in advance to work through the PAWS phase of drug withdrawal.

Post Acute Withdrawal Syndrome Symptoms

Some of the most common symptoms of post acute withdrawal syndrome after detox include:

- Acute stress sensitivity
- Extreme mood swings
- Poor physical coordination
- Fluctuating energy levels

- Anxiety
- Inability to focus
- Obsessive thinking
- Depression
- Sleep difficulties
- Lack of ability to feel pleasure

What Causes PAWS?

Post-Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (PAWS) is due to changes in neurotransmitters brought on by the brain's response to substance addiction, in which it attempts to adapt itself to the changes.

1. When a person stops using an addictive drug, the neurotransmitters undergo changes again, which may overstimulate or agitate the individual mentally and emotionally.
2. Habitual substance use over time can cause the brain to lose some of its capacity for managing stress.
3. The withdrawal experience can impact the stress-coping capacity of the brain.

The persistent symptoms of PAWS appear to be due to these changes in the brain. Medical science researchers have suggested that these are the same changes that cause increased levels of tolerance during the user's period of habitual substance abuse.

How Long Does PAWS Last?

Post acute withdrawal symptoms may persist up to as long as two years. The length of the PAWS phase of substance withdrawal varies based on the person's health, the type of drug used, how long it was used, and the way it was consumed. PAWS symptoms sometimes reach their point of greatest intensity at around the six-month point and can even threaten efforts to avoid relapse. Typically, PAWS is likely to persist longer in a person who:

- Used the substance habitually over a long period.
- Consistently used large amounts or frequent doses of the drug.
- Consumed drugs by injecting or snorting.
- Has liver or kidney issues.
- Is older and has more limited physical resilience.

How to Treat and Manage PAWS

The rough symptoms of post acute withdrawal syndrome can cause a sense of despair in people struggling to avoid resorting to relapse for relief. It's critical to understand that the PAWS symptoms will stop eventually. These are the steps to coping with and overcoming PAWS that people in substance addiction recovery need to adopt in order to best avoid relapse:

- Build strong coping skills in rehab.
- Continue in treatment longer.
- Build a strong support system while in rehab.
- Avoid situations that present a high risk of relapse.

Why Choose Renaissance Recovery Center?

If you or someone you love needs alcohol support or is suffering from post acute withdrawal syndrome, Renaissance Recovery Center in Gilbert, Arizona, can be of great help. Our relapse prevention systems have made Renaissance one of the region's most effective substance addiction treatment programs. We accept most health insurance.

If you need PAWS to support, don't just try to endure on your own.

Get the best help available to you!

Call Renaissance Recovery Center at (480) 526-7738, or contact us here online to schedule a free assessment today and find out how we can help you!
