

## What's a RAAM clinic?

**Rapid access addiction medicine (RAAM) clinics** are drop-in clinics for people looking for help with their substance use. The people working at these clinics know how difficult it is to ask for help. **You don't need an appointment** to attend



this clinic – just show up during clinic hours with your health card.

## Your history

The clinic team will begin by asking you about your history of opioid use: when and how you started using opioids, how much and how frequently you use, the ways that opioid use has affected your life, and so on. The point of these questions is not to make you feel guilty or defensive, but to get a complete picture of you in order to determine how to help you. Try to remember the clinic team is not there to judge you, and will be most able to treat you if you're **completely open** about your opioid use.

## Your diagnosis

Based on your history, the RAAM clinic team may diagnose you with an **opioid use disorder**, which is a **problematic opioid habit** that results in **negative life consequences**. It is a **treatable condition**, and with help, people **can and do recover**.

People who experience withdrawal symptoms when they stop using opioids may be offered opioid agonist therapy. **Buprenorphine** and **methadone** are both long-acting opioids that prevent withdrawal for a full 24 hours, helping people through the early days of recovery. Taking these medications is not **“cheating,”** and doesn't mean that you are **“not really sober.”** The physical and psychological symptoms of withdrawal are very real, and the medications prevent these symptoms, allowing you to focus on establishing a healthy lifestyle.



## Counselling

The RAAM clinic team may refer you to counselling as part of your treatment. Counselling programs can include education on healthy lifestyle choices, group and individual therapy sessions, help with developing coping skills, cognitive behavioural therapy, and peer support groups. The team will work with you to determine what form of counselling would be most helpful for you.

## Chronic pain

Many people with opioid use disorders suffer from chronic pain, and worry that stopping their opioids will worsen that pain. However, it's likely that your pain will actually get better if you stop using opioids. If you're on a high opioid dose, you could be experiencing withdrawal several times a day as the opioid wears off, and while you're in withdrawal your pain will be much worse. Treatment will resolve these withdrawal symptoms, so your pain will improve.

## If you're not ready to stop

If you're not ready to stop using opioids yet, follow these tips to increase your safety and decrease your chance of dying from an accidental overdose:

1. **Never use alone.** Make sure you have a buddy with you, and make sure you both know the signs of overdose so you know when to call for help.
2. **Watch your dose.** Your tolerance goes down very quickly after you haven't used for a while (even just a few days), so if you're using for the first time after a period of abstinence, use a much smaller dose than usual.
3. **Don't inject.** This is the most dangerous way of taking opioids.
4. **Don't mix,** especially other sedative substances like alcohol or benzos.
5. **Always carry naloxone** so you can temporarily reverse an overdose. Visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-naloxone-kits-free> to find out where you can get a free naloxone kit and training.

<http://www.womenscollegehospital.ca/programs-and-services/METAPHI/>

# Toronto RAAM Clinics

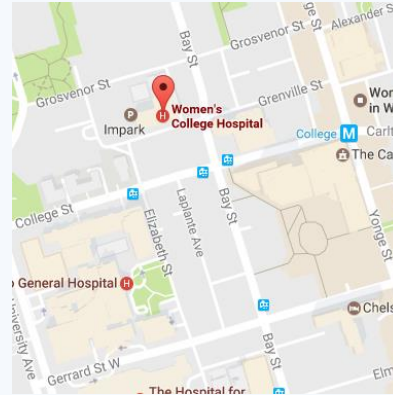
## Problematic Opioid Use: Your options for treatment

### St. Joseph's Health Centre Tues & Thurs 10:00–11:30



30 The Queensway, Ground Floor  
416-530-6486 ext. 3969

### Women's College Hospital Mon, Tues, & Thurs 10:00–12:00



76 Grenville St., 3rd Floor  
416-323-7559 ext. 6

### Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre Wed 2:00–4:00



2075 Bayview Avenue, Room B6 34  
416-480-6100 ext. 6736

### St. Michael's Hospital Mon, Wed, & Fri 9:00–11:00



30 Bond St., 17th Floor, Cardinal Carter  
Wing  
416-864-3082

### Toronto Western Hospital Mon & Wed 9:00–11:00



399 Bathurst St., Ground Floor, West Wing,  
WW1-414  
416-603-2581 (main switchboard)

### St. Michael's Hospital Family Health Team Wed 12:00–4:00 (pregnant patients only)



St. James Town Health Centre  
410 Sherbourne St., Ground Floor  
416-864-3082

**Opioids** are powerful narcotics with painkilling properties. Although many opioids are prescribed by doctors to help people cope with pain, they can be dangerous. Some people become **addicted** to opioids: they experience **cravings** and **withdrawal symptoms**, and have **difficulty stopping their use** even when they want to. Opioid use also puts you at risk for **overdose**: opioids work by relaxing the nervous system, making us less aware of pain. If the nervous system gets **too** relaxed, it can stop performing survival functions like breathing, sometimes leading to death.

It can be very hard to accept that your opioid use is problematic; it's normal to feel ashamed, frightened, or angry, and you might not be ready to stop. This pamphlet contains information about how to **increase your safety** and **decrease your chance of dying** from an accidental overdose, and how to **seek help** for an opioid addiction.