

## [Pharmacotherapy](#) [1]

Pharmacotherapy is an evidence-based medical treatment that can drastically improve and even save lives.

### What is Pharmacotherapy?

Pharmacotherapy is an effective medical treatment to reduce people's use of opioids such as heroin, Oxycontin and Fentanyl. It is also referred to as opioid replacement therapy (ORT), opioid substitution therapy (OST), opioid agonist treatment (OAT) or medication-assisted treatment of opioid dependence (MATOD).

Opioid dependence is a complex health condition that affects people from all walks of life—not only injecting drug users but also people who become dependent upon pain relievers because of a range of different circumstances. Long-term treatment and care involving medications such as methadone and buprenorphine (Suboxone) have been proven to:

- Reduce the use of heroin or other opiates
- Reduce the rate of criminal activity in the community
- Prevent the spread of blood-borne viruses
- Assist people to stabilise their lives and lead more productive lives
- Reduce illness and death related to drug taking.

In Victoria the most common way to access this treatment is through general practitioners, who prescribe the medication, and local pharmacists, who dispense it.

### Evidence base

Further resources on the evidence-base for ORT can be found at the following links:

- [The Victorian Department of Health policy for maintenance pharmacotherapy](#) [2]
- [Medication assisted treatment of opioid dependence: a review of the evidence](#) [3]

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#### Links

[1] <https://orticare.bchc.org.au/pharmacotherapy>

[2] <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/drugs-and-poisons/pharmacotherapy/pharmacotherapy-policy-in-victoria>

[3] <https://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/resource/medication-assisted-treatment-opioid-dependence-review-evidence>