

# Buprenorphine

## What You Need to Know

September 2020



### What is buprenorphine?

- Buprenorphine - or bup - is medicine for people who have chronic pain or addiction to opioids (heroin or pain pills). Many people know it by brand names like Suboxone® and Subutex®.
- Buprenorphine helps get rid of cravings and withdrawal, without making you feel high.
- People have less overdoses when they take buprenorphine. It is a safe medicine that has been used for 30 years.
- It is not substituting one drug for another—it is a daily medicine that you may need to stay healthy.
- Often buprenorphine and naloxone are taken together in 1 pill. Naloxone is the same as Narcan®, but if you take the medicine under the tongue the naloxone doesn't go in your body and can't make you sick. Naloxone is only there to make sure that people don't crush the pill and inject it—if you do that, the naloxone does go into your body and does make you sick.

### What is it like to take buprenorphine?

- Many people say that their cravings and withdrawal go away, they feel “clear in the head,” and their chronic pain gets better.
- Every morning you put a pill or a film strip under your tongue and let it dissolve—don't swallow it.
- People need to take it every day in most cases, and do feel sick if they stop taking it suddenly.
- Usually there are no side effects, but some people have headaches, stomach upset, or trouble sleeping.
- Many people keep taking it for years, or forever. If you want to stop taking it that is ok, but talk to your medical team first.
- The chance of an overdose on buprenorphine is very low, but if mixed with other drugs or alcohol overdose is possible.
- Some people take buprenorphine as a once a month shot under the skin of the belly. This is a great option if taking a medicine every day is hard for you.

### Is buprenorphine right for me?

- If you are currently taking methadone, talk to your medical team before switching.
- Before taking the first dose of buprenorphine, most people need to feel some withdrawal. That is important because if you take it while other opioids are in your system, you can get very sick.
- **Talk to your medical team to see if buprenorphine is a good medicine for you.** There are many good choices for treatment, only you and your team know what is best for you.

### How do I get buprenorphine?

- **You can go to any of the places below to get started.** You may need to visit more than once before getting the first dose. In some clinics (like methadone clinics), you may come in every day to pick up your buprenorphine dose.
- Instead of going to a methadone clinic, you can get the medicine from a **primary care doctor**. At first you may need daily visits, but many people can soon switch to weekly or monthly visits.
- Some **telemedicine groups** offer prescriptions over the internet/phone instead of in a doctor's office, so you need a phone and internet to use those services.

Provider—Please write in other options such as inpatient, medical respite, primary care, etc. as applicable to this patient.

Name of Organization			
Address			
Phone			
Hours			

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