

# GETTING STARTED ON BUPRENORPHINE: *Low Dose (Micro) Initiation Method* for New Patients

Patient Name \_\_\_\_\_ Provider Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

The low dose (micro) initiation method involves maintaining your baseline use of opioids while gradually increasing your use of buprenorphine over five to seven days. This method may be right for you if:

You agree to check in with an Ideal Option nurse daily via phone or text, and:

- You are unable or do not wish to use methadone
- You cannot abstain from opioids for 24-36 hours
- You have tried conventional initiation in the past and failed
- You are anxious about feeling withdrawal symptoms
- You are unable to participate in inpatient medically-supervised withdrawal (sometimes referred to as “detox”)
- You are transitioning from methadone to buprenorphine

If any of the above statements apply to you, you can start low dose initiation immediately after you pick up your prescription, regardless of when you last used opioids.

### IMPORTANT!

As you increase your dose of buprenorphine during low dose initiation, it is important to maintain your baseline use of opioids (e.g. fentanyl, heroin, pain pills) for as long as it takes you to reach your target dose of buprenorphine. Opioid use should stop once your target buprenorphine dose is reached. If you experience severe withdrawal symptoms, reach out to the Nurse Care Team at 1-877-522-1275 to discuss an alternative initiation method.

### Buprenorphine Start Time

Start taking buprenorphine at (time) \_\_\_\_\_ on (day) \_\_\_\_\_

| Day 1                    | Day 2                    | Day 3                   | Day 4                   | Day 5                   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Take ½ mg every 12 hours | Take 1 mg every 12 hours | Take 1 mg every 8 hours | Take 2 mg every 8 hours | Take 4 mg every 8 hours |

**Additional Prescriptions** (circle all that apply)

You have also been prescribed medication for overdose and withdrawal symptoms:

- Narcan (naloxone): in case of overdose (see instructions on last page)
- Clonidine: for restlessness, hot flashes, shakiness, tremor, sweating, goosebumps, runny nose, tearing
- Vistaril (hydroxyzine): for anxiety
- Zofran (ondansetron): for nausea

**Prescription Pick-Up**

Your prescription should be filled within 24 hours at your selected pharmacy. If your prescription is not ready for pick-up within 24 hours, please call 1-877-522-1275 (press option #1, then #3).

**Next Visit**

You should plan to return to Ideal Option (check one):

- Twice Per Week     Once Per Week

Please schedule your next visit for (date): \_\_\_\_\_

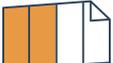
**Nurse Care Manager**

Your Nurse Care Manager will check in with you regularly to answer questions about dosing and/or withdrawal symptoms. You can reach out to a nurse at any time by calling 1-877-522-1275 (press #1, then #6).

Please follow the instructions below according to the type and amount of buprenorphine you were provided at the pharmacy.

**2-0.5mg FILM STRIP**

If you have buprenorphine-naloxone 2-0.5mg film strips (generic or Suboxone®) follow these dosing instructions. You will need to slice your film strips for the first 3 days.

|                               | DAY 1   | DAY 2   | DAY 3   | DAY 4  | DAY 5  | DAY 6   |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|--|--|---|
| How Much Do I Take?           | <br><b>¼ film strip</b><br>(0.5mg) | <br><b>½ film strip</b><br>(1mg) | <br><b>½ film strip</b><br>(1mg) | <br><b>1 film strip</b><br>(2mg) | <br><b>2 film strips</b><br>(4mg) | <p><b>DAY 6</b></p> <p>We will adjust your dose on Day 6 depending on your withdrawal symptoms and cravings up to 24mg per day.</p> |
| How Often Do I Take It?       | <b>Every 12 hours</b><br>(2 doses per day)  | <b>Every 12 hours</b><br>(2 doses per day)  | <b>Every 8 hours</b><br>(3 doses per day)   | <b>Every 8 hours</b><br>(3 doses per day)  | <b>Every 8 hours</b><br>(3 doses per day)  |   |
| What Is The Total Daily Dose? | <b>¼ film strip</b><br>(1mg)  | <b>1 film strip</b><br>(2mg)  | <b>1½ film strips</b><br>(3mg)  | <b>3 film strips</b><br>(6mg)  | <b>6 film strips</b><br>(12mg)   |   |

## 4-1mg FILM STRIP

If you have buprenorphine-naloxone 4-1mg film strips (generic or Suboxone®) follow these dosing instructions. You will need to slice your film strips for the first 4 days.

|                               | DAY 1   | DAY 2   | DAY 3   | DAY 4  | DAY 5   | DAY 6  |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| How Much Do I Take?           | <br><b>1/8 film strip</b><br>(0.5mg) | <br><b>1/4 film strip</b><br>(1mg) | <br><b>1/4 film strip</b><br>(1mg) | <br><b>1/2 film strip</b><br>(2mg) | <br><b>1 film strip</b><br>(4mg) | <p><b>DAY 6</b><br/>We will adjust your dose on Day 6 depending on your withdrawal symptoms and cravings up to 24mg per day.</p> |
| How Often Do I Take It?       | <b>Every 12 hours</b><br>(2 doses per day)  | <b>Every 12 hours</b><br>(2 doses per day)  | <b>Every 8 hours</b><br>(3 doses per day)   | <b>Every 8 hours</b><br>(3 doses per day)  | <b>Every 8 hours</b><br>(3 doses per day)   |  |
| What Is The Total Daily Dose? | <b>1/8 film strip</b><br>(1mg)  | <b>1/2 film strip</b><br>(2mg)  | <b>3/4 film strips</b><br>(3mg)   | <b>1 1/2 film strips</b><br>(6mg)  | <b>3 film strips</b><br>(12mg)  |  |

## 8-2mg FILM STRIP

If you have buprenorphine-naloxone 8-2mg film strips (generic or Suboxone®) follow these dosing instructions. You will need to slice your film strips.

|                               | DAY 1   | DAY 2  | DAY 3  | DAY 4   | DAY 5  | DAY 6  |
|-------------------------------|---|--|--|---|--|--|
| How Much Do I Take?           | <br><b>1/16 film strip</b><br>(0.5mg) | <br><b>1/8 film strip</b><br>(1mg) | <br><b>1/8 film strip</b><br>(1mg) | <br><b>1/4 film strip</b><br>(2mg) | <br><b>1/2 film strip</b><br>(4mg) | <p><b>DAY 6</b><br/>We will adjust your dose on Day 6 depending on your withdrawal symptoms and cravings up to 24mg per day.</p> |
| How Often Do I Take It?       | <b>Every 12 hours</b><br>(2 doses per day)  | <b>Every 12 hours</b><br>(2 doses per day)   | <b>Every 8 hours</b><br>(3 doses per day)  | <b>Every 8 hours</b><br>(3 doses per day)   | <b>Every 8 hours</b><br>(3 doses per day)  |  |
| What Is The Total Daily Dose? | <b>1/8 film strip</b><br>(1mg)  | <b>1/4 film strip</b><br>(2mg)   | <b>3/8 film strips</b><br>(3mg)  | <b>3/4 film strips</b><br>(6mg)   | <b>1 1/2 film strips</b><br>(12mg)   |  |

## 2-0.5mg or 2mg TABLET

If you have buprenorphine-naloxone 2-0.5mg tablets or buprenorphine 2mg tablets follow these dosing instructions. You will need to split your tablets for the first 3 days.

|                               | DAY 1   | DAY 2   | DAY 3   | DAY 4  | DAY 5  | DAY 6  |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| How Much Do I Take?           | <br><b>1/4 Tablet</b><br>(0.5mg) | <br><b>1/2 Tablet</b><br>(1mg) | <br><b>1/2 Tablet</b><br>(1mg) | <br><b>1 Tablet</b><br>(2mg) | <br><b>2 Tablets</b><br>(4mg) | <p><b>DAY 6</b><br/>We will adjust your dose on Day 6 depending on your withdrawal symptoms and cravings up to 24mg per day.</p> |
| How Often Do I Take It?       | <b>Every 12 hours</b><br>(2 doses per day)  | <b>Every 12 hours</b><br>(2 doses per day)  | <b>Every 8 hours</b><br>(3 doses per day)   | <b>Every 8 hours</b><br>(3 doses per day)  | <b>Every 8 hours</b><br>(3 doses per day)  |  |
| What Is The Total Daily Dose? | <b>1/2 Tablet</b><br>(1mg)  | <b>1 Tablet</b><br>(2mg)  | <b>1 1/2 Tablets</b><br>(3mg)   | <b>3 Tablets</b><br>(6mg)  | <b>6 Tablets</b><br>(12mg)   |  |

## Zubsolv 1.4mg/0.36mg TABLET

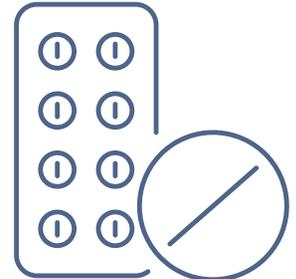
If you have Zubsolv tablets follow these dosing instructions. You will need to split your tablets for the first 3 days.

|                               | DAY 1   | DAY 2  | DAY 3  | DAY 4   | DAY 5   | DAY 6   |
|-------------------------------|---|--|--|---|---|---|
| How Much Do I Take?           |  <b>¼ Tablet</b><br>(0.35mg) |  <b>½ Tablet</b><br>(0.7mg) |  <b>½ Tablet</b><br>(0.7mg) |  <b>1 Tablet</b><br>(1.4mg) |  <b>2 Tablets</b><br>(2.8mg) | <p><b>DAY 6</b></p> <p>We will adjust your dose on Day 6 depending on your withdrawal symptoms and cravings up to 17.2mg per day.</p> |
| How Often Do I Take It?       | <b>Every 12 hours</b><br>(2 doses per day)  | <b>Every 12 hours</b><br>(2 doses per day)   | <b>Every 8 hours</b><br>(3 doses per day)  | <b>Every 8 hours</b><br>(3 doses per day)   | <b>Every 8 hours</b><br>(3 doses per day)   |   |
| What Is The Total Daily Dose? | <b>½ Tablet</b><br>(0.7mg)  | <b>1 Tablet</b><br>(1.4mg)   | <b>1½ Tablets</b><br>(2.1mg)   | <b>3 Tablets</b><br>(4.2mg)   | <b>6 Tablets</b><br>(8.4mg)   |   |

## WHAT IS BUPRENORPHINE?

Buprenorphine (Suboxone<sup>®</sup>, Subutex<sup>®</sup>, Zubsolv<sup>®</sup>) is a safe and effective medication that will help you stop using opioids like fentanyl, heroin, and pain pills.

The first phase of treatment with buprenorphine is called “initiation” and can last up to 5 days or more. When doing initiation at home, it’s important to get the timing and dose of buprenorphine right, so you don’t enter **precipitated withdrawal**.

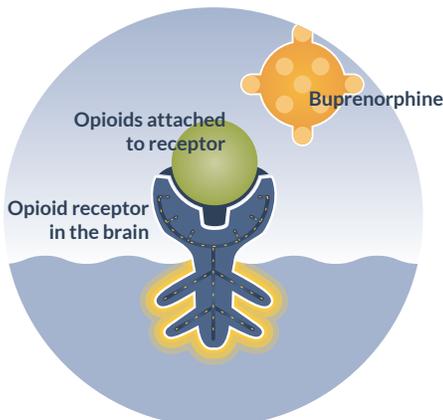


## WHAT IS PRECIPITATED WITHDRAWAL?

**Precipitated Withdrawal** is an extreme form of withdrawal that can happen quickly if you take too much buprenorphine too soon. It results in severe pain and symptoms such as fever, muscle aches, vomiting, and diarrhea. Here’s how it can happen:

### HIGH AFFINITY

Buprenorphine binds tightly to the receptor, displacing other opioids.



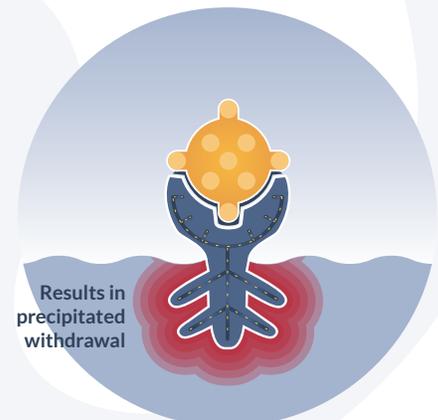
### PARTIAL AGONIST

Buprenorphine produces significantly less effect than a full agonist opioid.



### NET OPIOID DEFICIT

Suddenly replacing a full agonist opioid with a partial agonist opioid leads to intense withdrawal.



# HOW TO TAKE BUPRENORPHINE

## BEFORE

For **30 MINUTES BEFORE** dosing,  
**DO NOT:**

-  Brush your teeth
-  Drink coffee
-  Drink cloudy liquids like milk or coffee creamer
-  Eat yogurt
-  Use tobacco or vaping products

These may reduce or block absorption of your medication.

## DOSING

 Drink a few sips of warm water before taking your medication.

 Place film strip or tablet **UNDER** your tongue and let it dissolve completely.

 When completely dissolved, set your timer for **15-20 minutes**.

 **DO NOT** spit, swallow, eat, smoke, vape, or drink during this time.

 After 15-20 minutes, spit out any remaining saliva then take a large sip of water, swish it around your teeth and gums and swallow.

 Repeat the steps above for each film strip or tablet.

## AFTER

For **30 MINUTES AFTER** dosing,  
**DO NOT:**

-  Drink any liquids
-  Eat any foods
-  Use tobacco or vaping products

These may reduce or block absorption of your medication.

**1 HOUR AFTER** dosing, **DO:**

 Brush your teeth to remove any traces of the medication.

## REMINDERS

- **Don't combine opioids with other substances.** The use of opioids, including buprenorphine, with alcohol or sedatives such as benzodiazepines (Xanax, Ativan, Valium), nerve pain medications (Lyrica, Gabapentin), and prescription sleep medications (Ambien, Lunestra) may increase the risk of respiratory depression, which can be fatal.
- **Check before starting new medications.** Speak with your provider before starting any new medication while taking buprenorphine.
- **Safe storage is critical.** Store your prescriptions away from other people, especially children, preferably in a secure location such as a lockbox or safe. We cannot replace lost or stolen medication.
- **Use Narcan in the event of an overdose.** First, call 911. Then, gently insert the tip of the nozzle into one nostril until your fingers on either side of the nozzle are against the bottom of the person's nose. Press the plunger firmly to give the dose of Narcan Nasal Spray. Remove the Narcan Nasal Spray from the nostril after giving the dose. Repeat every 2-3 minutes until the person responds.
- **Protect your teeth.** Buprenorphine may cause tooth decay. After the medicine has been under the tongue for 15-20 minutes and is completely dissolved, spit out any remaining saliva. Then, take a large sip of water, swish it around your teeth and gums, and swallow. Wait one hour before brushing your teeth.
- **Community resources.** Ask the front desk for information on recovery support services in your local community.