

# GETTING STARTED ON BUPRENORPHINE: *Conventional Initiation Method* for New Patients

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

For conventional initiation, it is essential that your last use of opioids is 24-36 hours before your first dose of buprenorphine AND you are starting to feel moderate symptoms of withdrawal such as restlessness, sweating, muscle aches, vomiting, diarrhea, and anxiety.

**24** **If you use short-acting opioids like Percocet, Vicodin, or Heroin**  
Stop use **24 HOURS** before your first dose of buprenorphine.

**36** **If you use long-acting opioids like Oxycontin, Morphine ER, or Fentanyl**  
Stop use **36 HOURS** before your first dose of buprenorphine.

After 24-36 hours have elapsed since your last use (depending on the type of opioid) and you are feeling withdrawal symptoms, follow these instructions:

### STEP ONE

**Take 2mg of buprenorphine (follow instructions at the end of this guide), and wait 60-90 minutes.**

### STEP TWO

**After 60-90 minutes, if you do not feel severe withdrawal symptoms, take another 2-4mg dose of buprenorphine.**

### STEP THREE

**Continue to take 2-4mg doses every 60-90 minutes up to the daily amount prescribed to you by your provider.**

**Note: If you experience severe withdrawal symptoms, wait 4-6 hours before attempting another 2 mg dose or 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) \_\_\_\_\_

**Daily Dose: Take \_\_\_\_\_ mg once daily**

#### 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): \_\_\_\_\_

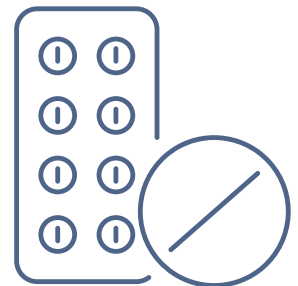
## Nurse Care Manager

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).

# 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**.

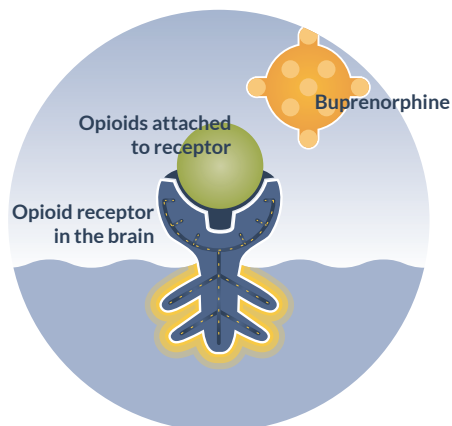


# WHAT IS PRECIPITATED WITHDRAWAL?

**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.



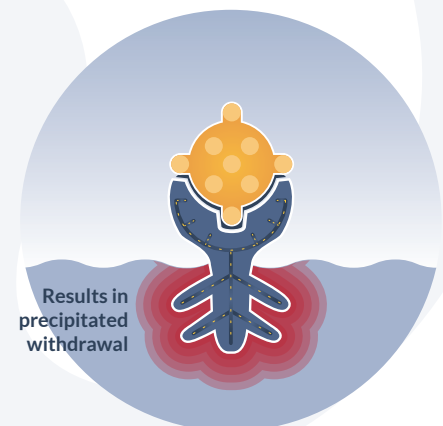
## PARTIAL AGONIST

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 filmstrip 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 filmstrip 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.
- **Avoid other opioids.** When using the conventional initiation method, any other medication or substances that contain opioids should be avoided, unless approved by your provider.
- **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.