

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

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

The rapid initiation method involves discontinuing use of fentanyl before initiating low-dose buprenorphine on DAY 1, then increasing to high-dose buprenorphine on DAY 2. This method may be right for you if:

- You last used fentanyl within the past 48 hours
- You are unable or do not wish to start treatment at a methadone clinic
- You are not currently using methadone
- You are not pregnant
- You are unable to follow the low dose (micro) initiation method
- You believe this method would be most appropriate for your situation
- You are not using alcohol or other sedating medications
- You do not have significant kidney or liver disease

## DAY 1 DOSING INSTRUCTIONS

You will be prescribed buprenorphine-naloxone 8-2mg film strips. On day 1 of initiation, you will need to cut one film strip into 8 equal-sized pieces using clean, dry scissors:

**STEP 1**

**Stop fentanyl use.**

**STEP 2**

**Wait 1 hour before starting 1 mg of buprenorphine every 6 hours.**



**STEP 3**

**Start withdrawal medications scheduled every 6 hours at onset of withdrawal symptoms. Hold additional doses if experiencing significant sedation.**

**STEP 4**

**Start supportive care: movement, massage, shower, bath, heating pads, fan.**

## DAY 2 DOSING INSTRUCTIONS

### STEP 1

Take 16 mg of buprenorphine once >12 hr from last fentanyl use (ideally >24hr), and wait 1 hour.



### STEP 2

Take another 8 mg of buprenorphine as needed for symptoms of opioid withdrawal, and wait 1 hour.



### STEP 3

Take another 8mg of buprenorphine as needed for symptoms of opioid withdrawal.



### STEP 4

Continue taking withdrawal medications every 6 hours. Hold additional doses if experiencing significant sedation.

**DO NOT REPEAT!** The maximum total dose of buprenorphine is 32mg.

## DAY 3 AND ONWARD DOSING INSTRUCTIONS

### STEP 1

Take \_\_\_\_ mg buprenorphine once daily.

### STEP 2

Continue taking withdrawal medications every 6 hours. Hold additional doses if experiencing significant sedation.

### Additional Prescriptions (circle all that apply)

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

- Narcan or Kloxxado (naloxone): in case of overdose (see instructions on last page)
- Gabapentin: for restlessness, anxiety
- Tizanidine: for restlessness, hot flashes, shakiness, tremor, sweating, goosebumps, runny nose, tearing
- Vistaril (hydroxyzine): for anxiety
- Remeron (mirtazapine): for sleep
- 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): \_\_\_\_\_

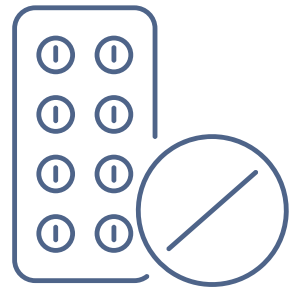
## Nurse Care Manager

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**.

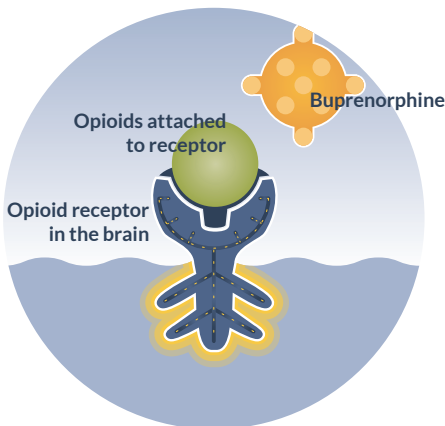


# WHAT IS PRECIPITATED WITHDRAWAL?

**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.



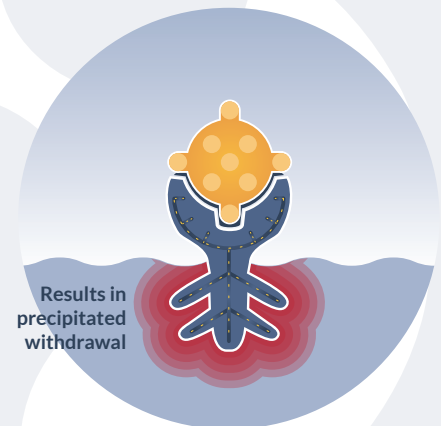
## PARTIAL AGONIST

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 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 or Kloxxado 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.