



PATIENT INFORMATION

Discontinuing Buprenorphine

What Does it Mean to Taper or Discontinue Buprenorphine?

Tapering means to *reduce your dose of buprenorphine slowly over time*.

Discontinuing means to *stop taking buprenorphine altogether*.

Abruptly stopping buprenorphine without tapering under the guidance of your provider may cause you to experience severe opioid withdrawal and cravings.

If you desire to discontinue buprenorphine at any point during your treatment, it is critical that you work with your provider to develop a tapering plan to minimize your feelings of withdrawal and cravings, and to help you meet your goals.

What are the Risks of Discontinuing Buprenorphine?

Addiction is a chronic disease that can be managed, but not cured. As a result, discontinuing buprenorphine may put you at risk for returning to opioid use, which has a **higher likelihood of overdose and/or death** due to decreased opioid tolerance. These risks increase when buprenorphine is discontinued prematurely, or without the guidance of an experienced provider.

When Can Tapering To Discontinuation Be Considered?

Ideal Option strongly recommends that patients who are stable on buprenorphine without significant side effects continue treatment on the medication indefinitely, as the benefits far exceed the risks of long-term medication use. However, we recognize that some patients may still desire to discontinue buprenorphine despite the risks.

Patients who make the decision to discontinue buprenorphine are more successful at maintaining stable, long-term recovery when they **meet the “checklist items” below before tapering to discontinuation**.

- ✓ No major life stressors (such as unstable finances, housing, or employment)
- ✓ Stable recovery environment (no exposure to people, places, and things associated with past substance use)
- ✓ Involvement in mutual-help programs (such as NA or SMART Recovery)
- ✓ Involvement in counseling services
- ✓ Long-term abstinence (at least 6-12 months)
- ✓ Demonstrated ability to cope with triggers
- ✓ Commitment to going through the taper to discontinuation process in partnership with their provider

How Can Ideal Option Help?

Patients who taper to discontinuation in partnership with their provider have far greater likelihood of success than those who attempt to do so on their own.

If you wish to discontinue buprenorphine treatment, we strongly recommend partnering with your **Ideal Option provider** to develop an individualized plan to taper to discontinuation, which will include the following steps:

1. **Review your long-term goals and motivation for discontinuing.**
2. **Discuss the risks and benefits of discontinuing.**
3. **Set realistic expectations** about the process and the timeline.
4. **Discuss options for tapering to discontinuation**, which may include long-acting injectable buprenorphine.
5. **Initiate the taper process when you are ready.**
6. **Make adjustments** to the tapering plan based on your response.
7. **Discuss alternative medication options following discontinuation**, including naltrexone and/or medications to reduce opioid withdrawal symptoms.
8. Once you have successfully discontinued, **attend any scheduled follow-up visits** to assess recovery stability during the transition.

Nurse Care Team

If you have a reaction or side effect that you believe may be due to tapering your buprenorphine or discontinuing buprenorphine altogether, reach out to a nurse at any time (available 24/7) by calling 1-877-522-1275 (press #1, then #6).

Return for Treatment at Any Time

We strongly encourage you to return to treatment at any time if you feel like you're at risk for return-to-use. You are welcome back, with open arms and free of judgment.

External Pressures to Discontinue Buprenorphine

Patients under external pressure to discontinue buprenorphine are at a higher risk for negative outcomes. If you're feeling "pressured" to discontinue buprenorphine (e.g. from a family member or a sober living facility), let us help you!

With your approval, we regularly invite family members, parole officers, and others into the clinic to explain the disease of opioid use disorder, the role of buprenorphine in achieving long-term stability, and the risks associated with discontinuation.

For Your Safety

- **It's always up to you!** Tapering should always be patient-initiated and may be paused at any point.
- **Use your community resources.** Ask the front desk for information on recovery support services in your local community.
- **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 the nasal spray. Remove the nasal spray from the nostril after giving the dose. Repeat every 2-3 minutes until the person responds.