

Buprenorphine (Suboxone) for opioid use disorder

- **What is Buprenorphine?**
- Buprenorphine is a medication approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to treat [Opioid Use Disorder \(OUD\)](#) as a medication-assisted treatment (MAT). As with all [medications used in MAT](#), buprenorphine should be prescribed as part of a comprehensive treatment plan that includes counseling and other behavioral therapies to provide patients with a whole-person approach.
- Buprenorphine is the first medication to treat OUD that can be prescribed or dispensed in physician offices, significantly increasing access to treatment.
- The [Drug Addiction Treatment Act of 2000 \(DATA 2000\)](#), the [Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act \(CARA\)](#) and the [Substance Use-Disorder Prevention Opioid Recovery and Treatment for Patients and Communities \(SUPPORT\) Act](#) allows qualified practitioners to dispense or prescribe buprenorphine for the treatment of opioid use disorders (OUD) in settings other than opioid treatment programs (OTP), upon completion of specialized training.
- Buprenorphine offers several benefits to those with OUD and to others for whom treatment in a methadone clinic is not appropriate or is less convenient.
- **The following buprenorphine products are FDA approved for the treatment of OUD:**
 - Generic Buprenorphine/naloxone sublingual tablets
 - Buprenorphine/naloxone sublingual films (Suboxone)
 - Buprenorphine/naloxone) sublingual tablets (Zubsolv)
 - Buprenorphine/naloxone buccal film (Bunavail)

How Buprenorphine Works

Buprenorphine is an opioid partial agonist. It produces effects such as euphoria or respiratory depression at low to moderate doses. With buprenorphine, however, these effects are weaker than full opioid agonists such as [methadone](#) and heroin. When taken as prescribed, buprenorphine is safe and effective.

Buprenorphine has unique pharmacological properties that help:

- Diminish the effects of physical dependency to opioids, such as withdrawal symptoms and cravings
- Increase safety in cases of overdose
- Lower the potential for misuse

Buprenorphine for Opioid Use Disorder

- To begin treatment, an OUD patient must abstain from using opioids for at least 12 to 24 hours and be in the early stages of opioid withdrawal. Patients with opioids in their bloodstream or who are not in the early stages of withdrawal, may experience acute withdrawal.
- After a patient has discontinued or greatly reduced their opioid use, no longer has cravings, and is experiencing few, if any, side effects, if needed, the dose of buprenorphine may be adjusted. Due to the long-acting agent of buprenorphine, once patients are stabilized, it may be possible to switch from every day to alternate-day dosing.
- The length of time a patient receives buprenorphine is tailored to meet the needs of each patient, and in some cases, treatment can be indefinite. To prevent possible relapse, individuals can engage in on-going treatment—with or without MAT.

Before Starting Buprenorphine

Patients diagnosed with an OUD should talk to their health care practitioner before starting treatment with buprenorphine to fully understand the medication and other available treatment options.

Common and Serious Side Effects of Buprenorphine

- **Common side effects of buprenorphine include:**
 - Constipation, headache, nausea, and vomiting
 - Dizziness
 - Drowsiness and fatigue
 - Sweating
 - Dry mouth
 - [Tooth decay](#)
 - Muscle aches and cramps
 - Inability to sleep
 - Fever
 - Blurred vision or dilated pupils
 - Tremors
 - Palpitations
 - Disturbance in attention
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- **Serious side effects of buprenorphine include:**
 - Respiratory distress
 - Overdose
 - Adrenal insufficiency
 - Dependence
 - Withdrawal
 - Neonatal abstinence syndrome (in newborns)

Need Help?

- If you, or someone you know, need help to stop using substances – whether the problem is methamphetamine, alcohol or another drug – call [SAMHSA's National Helpline](#) at 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or TTY: 1-800-487-4889
- [SAMHSA's Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](#) is a confidential and anonymous source of information for persons seeking treatment facilities
- [SAMHSA's Buprenorphine Practitioner Locator](#) can help find practitioners authorized to treat opioid dependency with buprenorphine.

Safety Precautions

- People should use the following precautions when taking buprenorphine:
 - Do not take other medications without first consulting your doctor.
 - Do not use illegal drugs, drink alcohol, or take sedatives, tranquilizers, or other drugs that slow breathing. Mixing large amounts of other medications with buprenorphine can lead to overdose or death.
 - Ensure that a physician monitors any liver-related health issues that you may have.
 - Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
 - Prevent children and pets from accidental ingestion by storing it out of reach. For more information, visit CDC's [Up and Away](#) educational campaign.
 - Dispose of unused methadone safely. Talk to your MAT practitioner for guidance, or for more information on the safe disposal of unused medications, visit [FDA's disposal of unused medicines](#) or [DEA's drug disposal](#) webpages
 - Do not shared your buprenorphine with anyone even if they have similar symptoms or suffer from the same condition.