

Patient Guide to Starting Buprenorphine at Home

Day 1: Are You Ready? Have You Been Using Opioids Recently?

Wait until other opioids are processed by your body and you are in withdrawal before starting buprenorphine.

Only start taking buprenorphine once **both (timing and symptoms)** of the following are true:



Timing: Wait at least 12 hours since you last took heroin or pain pills (oxycodone, hydrocodone) or 48-72 hours since you last took methadone.

Time of last opioid dose: _____.



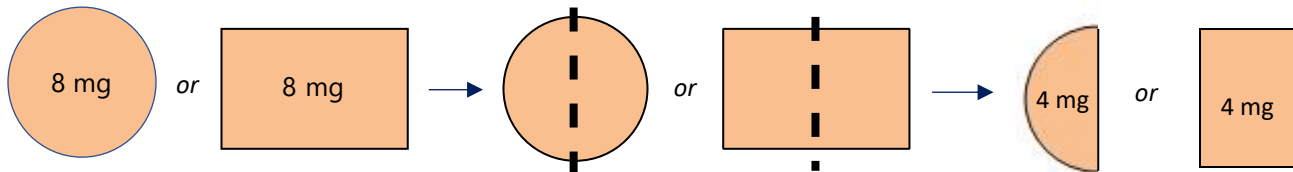
Symptoms: You should have at least 3 of the following symptoms, showing that you are in withdrawal:

- Shaking or tremors
- Anxiety or irritability
- Heavy yawning
- Joint and bone aches
- Goosebumps, enlarged pupils
- Chills or sweating
- Nausea or vomiting, diarrhea

YOU WILL BE PRESCRIBED SUBOXONE. SUBOXONE IS BUPRENORPHINE AND NALOXONE, FOR SIMPLICITY WE WILL CALL THIS BUPRENORPHINE.

First Dose

Your first dose should be 4 mg of buprenorphine, which is **half** of a tablet or film.



The medication does not work if swallowed or injected. It cannot be absorbed if swallowed and injecting results in severe withdrawal from naloxone. The medication only works if taken the following way. First moisten your mouth with a sip of water; this helps the medication dissolve faster.



1. Put the first dose **under your tongue**.
2. Keep the medication there for **15 min**. Do not eat or drink anything for 30 minutes.
3. **Check in at 1 hour**. If you still feel bad, put the other half tablet or half-film (4 mg) under your tongue and keep it there for 15 minutes.

For the Rest of Day 1

During the first day, keep checking in to see how you feel.



1. Check every 3 to 6 hours to see how you feel. If you feel fine, don't take any more medications. If you have withdrawal, take another 4 mg (half-tablet or half-film) under your tongue.



2. Do not take more than 12 mg on the first day of buprenorphine (1.5 tablets or films). If you feel really bad (such as an even worse withdrawal) after starting medications, go to the emergency department.



3. Note the following:

How much medication did I take in total on Day 1? _____

Day 2 and Onward

Plan to take some medication every day. Do not wait until you are in withdrawal again to take medication on Day 2 and onward. You should be able to stay comfortable.



1. Check in when you wake up. If you feel fine, take the total dose of medication that you took on the previous day (what you wrote in the blank). **If you don't feel well, you may need to change your dose.**



2. Changing your dose: If you feel like you're in withdrawal, you may need a higher dose. If that's the case, take the amount you took the day before and add another 4 mg (half-tablet or half-film) to that dose. If you're too sleepy, lower your dose by 4 mg.



3. Do not take more than 16 mg of medication on any day (2 full tablets or films). If you need more than 2 tablets or films daily or have a hard time getting comfortable, call our clinic for help. If you are very sick, go to the emergency room.

Follow Up With Our Clinic

We want to check in with you while you start medications to make sure that you are doing well and to continue medications. My next appointment with the clinic is on (date/time): _____

Important Additional Information

1. Side effects from buprenorphine are like side effect of other opioids.
2. Use of buprenorphine with alcohol or other depressing medication can increase risk of overdose.
3. It is important that you keep this medication away from children; a lock box is highly encouraged.
4. Discontinuing buprenorphine increases the risk of return to opioid use and death.
5. Please alert your provider if you become pregnant or need a dental/medical procedure.
6. Buprenorphine is a great start to beating addiction. Narcotics Anonymous & psychosocial treatment can help too.

This information was distilled from SAMHSA & ASAM.