

Instructions for starting buprenorphine (Suboxone) at home

It is not safe to mix buprenorphine and benzodiazepines (the class of drugs that includes Valium, Klonopin, Xanax, Ativan, etc.). **Please do not start taking buprenorphine if you have used any of these drugs recently, or intend to do so in the future.**

You must wait to start buprenorphine until you are withdrawing (kicking) from opiates (heroin, pain pills, etc.). If you start buprenorphine while you are still high, the buprenorphine will make you sick.

Wait to start taking buprenorphine until you are having withdrawal symptoms. Usually the most reliable sign of withdrawal is that your pupils start to get big—this means that the black area in the middle of your eye will get larger than normal.

Other common signs that you are ready to take buprenorphine are when you have **several** of the following symptoms:

- Anxiety, can't sit still
- Aches
- Nausea or upset stomach
- Chills or "goose-bumps"
- Heart going fast, or pounding

If you're not sure, wait awhile longer before you start the buprenorphine.

When you think it is time to start buprenorphine, here is what you should do:

- Break one (8 mg) tablet in half.
- Take everything out of your mouth (gum, etc.)
- Sit or stand, but don't lie down.
- Take a sip of water to wet your mouth and tongue, then swallow the water or spit it out.
- Put one half of the buprenorphine tablet under your tongue. Do not swallow it or suck on it. Even if it does not taste good, it is important that you let it sit under your tongue until it is completely dissolved. Try not to even swallow your saliva until the pill has dissolved completely. Any buprenorphine that you swallow (or spit out) will not make you feel better. Don't talk while the pill is dissolving, just sit still and wait.

You should start to feel some effect in about 20 minutes. Usually, you will feel a little better, or at least, no worse. If you feel worse, it means you started taking it too soon. Stop taking buprenorphine for a couple of hours, and then try again; or come to the clinic and we can help you get started on the medicine.

If you felt better or the same after the first pill, you can take another half of a pill in about 40 minutes, dissolving it the same way that you did before.

You can repeat this two more times (for a total of two whole pills, or 16 mg) during the first 24 hours after starting buprenorphine.

The next morning you can take the same amount you took on day 1, but take it all at once in the morning. You will usually only need to take buprenorphine once a day after the first day.

You should adjust your daily dose so that you are taking 1 and a half or two pills per day (12-16 mg per day). At this dose, all of the opiate receptors in your brain will be filled with buprenorphine, and this will really cut down on the craving, and help avoid withdrawal symptoms.

Remember that one of the most important parts of recovery from addiction is participating in groups or in counseling.

How about going to a recovery group today, at Health Care for the Homeless or at Narcotics Anonymous?