
BUPRENORPHINE Fact Sheet for Patients

Generic Name: Buprenorphine (byoo-pre-NOR-feen)

Brand Names: Brixadi, Bunavail, Sublocade, Suboxone, Subutex, Zubsolv

What Does It Treat?

This medication is used to help manage moderate to severe opioid use disorder. It is also used to provide relief from moderate to severe pain.

How Does It Work?

Buprenorphine is a drug that helps lessen withdrawal symptoms and cravings for opioids. Using it is linked to reduced illicit opioid use and deaths due to overdoses, as well as lower rates of death from cancer, suicide, alcohol-related issues, and heart diseases.

How Do I Take It?

Buprenorphine can be taken as a tablet or film under the tongue, as a film placed on the inside of the cheek, or as a weekly or monthly injection under the skin. Tablets under the tongue can take up to 10 minutes to fully dissolve, while films can take up to two minutes to dissolve. Allowing the medication to fully dissolve ensures that your body fully absorbs it. After the medication is dissolved, rinse your mouth with water and avoid brushing your teeth or eating for an hour. If the taste is not to your liking, you can chew a sugar-free peppermint before and after taking the tablet. Injections are administered at a doctor's office or pharmacy, not at home.

How Long Will I Take It?

Stopping buprenorphine can lead to an increased risk of death from opioid overdose, so many people continue to take it indefinitely. The duration of treatment varies, but it's generally recommended to take it for at least 12 months, as this duration has been linked with better results. Do not stop taking it on your own; discuss with your provider if you'd like to consider stopping it.

What if I Miss a Dose?

If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember, unless it's nearly time for your next dose. In that case, skip the missed dose. Do not take a double dose to make up for the missed one.

What Are Possible Side Effects?

- Most common: Constipation, headaches, trouble sleeping, nausea, anxiety.
- Serious but rare: Liver inflammation (hepatitis), abnormal heart rhythm (QT prolongation).

What Else Should I Know?

- It's important to follow your doctor's instructions when taking buprenorphine to ensure it's used safely and to prevent misuse.
- Avoid taking other opioids or central nervous system depressants, like benzodiazepines, while you're on buprenorphine.
- Make sure to inform your healthcare providers that you're taking this medication. Consider carrying a card in your wallet or something similar to indicate you're on this medication.
- Some forms of buprenorphine include another medication called naloxone. The combination is often used because it is more widely available and may be less likely to be misused. If you're pregnant or have a negative reaction to naloxone, you might be prescribed buprenorphine alone.