

Can I switch from methadone to buprenorphine?

Yes, but first you need to cut down to a low dose of methadone (30-40mg).

Does buprenorphine have other benefits?

Yes! Buprenorphine treatment for addiction helps people better protect against hepatitis C and HIV (the virus that causes AIDS).

People in withdrawal are much more likely to take risks such as sharing needles and having unprotected sex – activities that spread hepatitis C and HIV. When you're "dope sick," getting straight can feel more important than protecting yourself and your partner.

Buprenorphine helps you stop craving heroin and feeling dope-sick so it is easier for you to be safe.

To find a doctor who prescribes buprenorphine call 1-800-LIFENET (1-800-543-3638) or 311

For more information call 311 or visit www.buprenorphine.samhsa.gov

Buprenorphine

(Suboxone)

Information for
Heroin Users

The Basics

What is buprenorphine?

Buprenorphine is a new medication to treat addiction to heroin or other opiates. It is a pill that dissolves under the tongue.

Unlike methadone, buprenorphine can be prescribed by doctors in an office setting. You can fill your prescription at a pharmacy, like other medication. You do not have to go to a clinic every day to get it.

What happens when you take buprenorphine?

Buprenorphine does different things depending on when you last used heroin:

- If you are high or straight on heroin, buprenorphine may put you into withdrawal.
- If you are in withdrawal, it makes you straight.

How does buprenorphine maintenance work?

Buprenorphine treats heroin addiction by:

- Preventing withdrawal symptoms.
- Stopping cravings.
- Blocking the heroin high.

Does buprenorphine have side effects?

Side effects are usually mild and might include constipation, nausea, and vomiting.

Can buprenorphine cause overdose?

It's difficult to overdose on buprenorphine by taking too much. Extra pills won't get you high and won't slow your breathing. However, it is dangerous to mix buprenorphine with alcohol or sedating drugs. *People who do can overdose.*

How does buprenorphine interact with other drugs?

Antiviral (HIV/AIDS) drugs:

Buprenorphine can be taken with antiviral drugs but it is important for your doctor to monitor your medication.

Benzodiazepines:

When buprenorphine is used with high doses of benzos (Valium, Klonopin, Xanax, etc.) the combination could lead to an overdose.

Pain medications:

Buprenorphine blocks the effect of opioid pain medicines. People with severe or long-term pain may do better on methadone. Talk to your doctor about what's best for *you*.

Will my health insurance pay for buprenorphine?

Yes. Both Medicaid and private insurance pay for buprenorphine. Without health coverage, buprenorphine can cost between \$5 and \$15 per day. For information about free or low-cost health insurance, call 311.

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