



# Buprenorphine/Naloxone



## What precautions should my doctor and I be aware of when taking this medication?

- Many medications may interact with buprenorphine/naloxone, including certain pain medications, medications that affect the heart rhythm, monoamine oxidase inhibitors, CNS depressants, sleep-aides, and several others. If you are (or begin) taking any other prescription, over-the-counter medication, natural health product or supplement, check with your doctor or pharmacist to see if they are safe to use.
- While taking this medication, if you feel dizzy, drowsy, or slowed down in the morning, do not drive a car or operate heavy machinery. Alcohol could make this worse. Try to avoid alcohol while taking buprenorphine/naloxone.
- Attending counselling (as recommended by your doctor) increases the likelihood that this medication will help you continue to overcome opioid dependence.



## What special instructions should I follow while using this medication?

Keep all your appointments with your doctor and the laboratory. Your doctor may order lab tests to check how you are responding, and to monitor for side effects. Try to keep a healthy, well-balanced diet and exercise regularly.

Do not allow anyone else to use your medication (the medication could cause overdose and/or serious harm to persons who are not opioid dependent or experiencing the same level of opioid dependence).



## What should I do if I forget to take a dose of this medication?

If you forget to take a dose of buprenorphine/naloxone, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. However, if it is more than 4 hours after your scheduled dose or most of the day has passed, skip the missed dose and continue regularly with your next scheduled dose. DO NOT double your next dose to try to 'catch up'.



## How do I store this medication?

Keep this medication in the original container, stored at room temperature away from moisture and heat and protected from light. Keep this medication out of reach and sight of children.



## How does this medication work?

Like other opioids, buprenorphine works by tightly binding to the same receptors in the brain as other opioids, such as heroin, morphine, and oxycodone. By doing so, it blunts intoxication with these other drugs, it prevents cravings, and allows many people to transition back from a life of addiction to a life of normalcy and safety. Naloxone is added to buprenorphine to help decrease risk of misuse and diversion (naloxone blocks the action of opioids and can cause feelings of withdrawal if this product is injected).



## How well does this medication work in children and adolescents?

Evidence from adults shows that buprenorphine/naloxone helps treat opioid dependence by preventing withdrawal symptoms (i.e., nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, anxiety, cold and clammy skin, sweating, body aches, loss of appetite) and to help decrease risk of misuse and diversion (i.e., need to inject).

Buprenorphine/naloxone has been studied for moderate to severe opioid dependence in adults and was shown to be significantly better than placebo (an inactive injection) in preventing withdrawal symptoms and opioid use. Its use has been shown to lower the risk of fatal overdoses by approximately 50% and also reduces the risk of nonfatal overdoses which are traumatic and medically dangerous. Buprenorphine/naloxone may be helpful for people with opioid dependence when combined with behavioural treatment.



## How long should I take this medication for?

This depends on your risk of using opioids after starting treatment with buprenorphine/naloxone. Your doctor will discuss the benefits and risks of taking buprenorphine/naloxone with you. At this time, you can also discuss how long you might need to take this medication. Once treatment has shown to be effective, your doctor may slowly reduce the maintenance dose until it can eventually be stopped.

Do not increase, decrease, or stop taking this medication without discussing it with your doctor. If you stop taking buprenorphine/naloxone suddenly you may experience an increased occurrence of withdrawal symptoms. If you feel this medication is not managing your symptoms well enough, speak with your doctor about your treatment options.