

## Instructions for starting buprenorphine (Suboxone) at home when you are using opiates (heroin, pain pills, etc) regularly

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:

- Agitation, can't sit still
- Aches
- Nausea or upset stomach, diarrhea
- Chills or “goose-bumps”
- Runny nose, tearing, yawning
- Dilated pupils (the most reliable sign that you are in enough withdrawal is that your pupil is so large you can hardly see the colored part of your eye)



If you are 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; or cut 8 mg film strip 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/film under your tongue. Do not swallow 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. Do not swallow your saliva until the pill/film has dissolved completely. Hold your saliva in your mouth for at least one full minute. Any buprenorphine that you swallow (or

spit out) will not make you feel better. Don't talk while the pill is dissolving, just sit 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 clinic and we can help you get started on the medicine.

If you feel better or the same after the first pill, you can take another half of a pill or film 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 films, 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.

For the first week or so, your daily dose will be between 8mg (one pill or film) and 16mg (two pills or films). Do not take any extra doses because you will run out before your next appointment. At your next appointment you can talk with your doctor about how well the dose is working.

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

**How about going to a recovery group today?**