

STARTING BUPRENORPHINE: STANDARD INITIATION

PREPARATION

- Stop the opioid for 24-72 hours (your provider will suggest how long you need to wait).
- When you are in moderate opioid withdrawal, you can begin your buprenorphine. If you begin too early, you can get very sick (precipitated withdrawal).
- Don't drink, eat, or smoke/vape/chew tobacco 15 minutes before or after your buprenorphine dose.
- Let buprenorphine dissolve completely in your mouth, do not chew or swallow.

WHEN YOU ARE READY TO START BUPRENORPHINE

DAY 1 (total of 2-4 films/tabs = 16mg-32mg)

- Dissolve half film/tab under your tongue.
- Wait 2 hours.
- If you feel better or the same:
 - Take another half film/tab.
 - Then take another full film/tab 6-12 hours later if you feel you need (you likely will).
 - If your provider instructed, you may take another full film/tab 6-12 hours later.
- If you feel much worse after your first buprenorphine dose, wait 4-8 hours and try again.

DAY 2-7 (take total of 2-4 films/tabs)

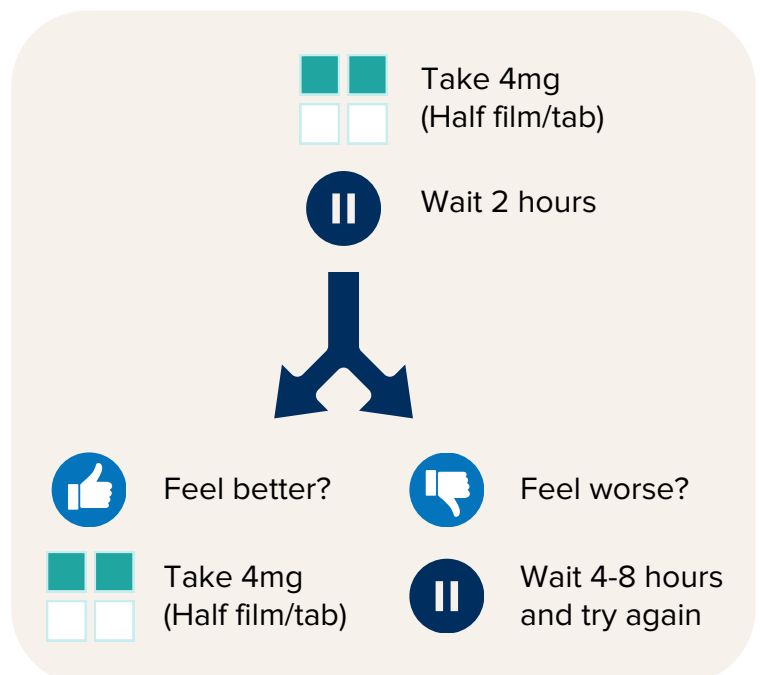
- Take 1-2 full films/tabs in the morning and 1-2 full films/tabs in the evening based on your provider's instructions.
- Your clinic will call you to check on how you are doing.

DAY 7

- Your clinic will usually set up an appointment at the office to see how you are doing and adjust your dose if needed.
- Call your clinic with any questions or concerns.

When am I in moderate withdrawal and ready to start buprenorphine?

- Withdrawal is different for everyone. Talk with your clinic if you aren't sure.
- Typical symptoms are large pupils, yawning, sweating, upset stomach, restlessness/can't sit still, runny nose, goosebumps, body aches, anxiety, and/or irritability. Wait until you have at least 3 different symptoms.
- Use the Subjective Opioid Withdrawal Scale (SOWS) to rate your symptoms and help determine when you are ready to start.



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What can I take to help with my withdrawal symptoms?

Your provider likely prescribed withdrawal support medications. You may start these as soon as you stop your opioid and do not need to wait for withdrawal symptoms to begin. You may continue these through the first few weeks on buprenorphine if needed.

- Clonidine/Catapres (for restlessness/sleep/anxiety)
- Hydroxyzine/Atarax (for anxiety/sleep)
- Trazodone (for sleep)
- Ondansetron/Zofran (for nausea)
- Dicyclomine/Bentyl (for abdominal cramps)

Subjective Opioid Withdrawal Scale (SOWS)

Use the Subjective Opioid Withdrawal Scale (SOWS) to rate your symptoms and help determine when you are in moderate withdrawal.

Rate each symptom on the scale of 0 - 4 for how you are feeling right now and write a number in the box:

- 0 = not at all
- 1 = a little
- 2 = moderately
- 3 = quite a bit
- 4 = extremely

For example if you feel moderately anxious, you would write a 2.

Add up the numbers to determine your total score:

Less than 17 = Wait to start buprenorphine

17 or greater = Start buprenorphine

SYMPTOM	SCORE (0-4)
I feel anxious	
I feel like yawning	
I am sweating	
My eyes are tearing	
My nose is running	
I have goosebumps	
I am shaking	
I have hot flushes	
I have cold flushes	
My bones and muscles ache	
I feel restless	
I feel nauseous	
I feel like vomiting	
My muscles are twitching	
I have stomach cramps	
I feel like using now	
TOTAL SCORE	