

# Suboxone *(say sub-ox-own)*

## What is Suboxone?

Suboxone is made of 2 medicines: buprenorphine and naloxone. We use it to treat opioid use disorder.

Some signs of opioid use disorder:

- cravings for opioids
- using more opioids than intended
- continuing to use opioids even though it causes issues in your personal or work life
- spending lots of time thinking about getting and using opioids

*My goal is to:*

- Completely stop using opioids.
- Reduce my cravings for opioids.
- Reduce my use of non-prescription opioids.
- Use opioids in a safe way.
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## How does Suboxone work?

Buprenorphine works on the same parts of the brain as other opioids like fentanyl, heroin, morphine, and oxycodone. It reduces cravings and prevents withdrawal. It attaches more tightly than most other opioids and can block some of their effects to reduce risk of overdose.

Naloxone becomes active and causes opioid withdrawal only if you do not take Suboxone correctly (examples of incorrect ways: crushing it then injecting or snorting it). Naloxone will not have this effect when Suboxone is taken correctly.

Suboxone can help in these ways:

- **Reduce** cravings for opioids.
- **Reduce** use of non-prescribed opioids.
- **Reduce** symptoms of opioid withdrawal.
- **Reduce** chances of opioid overdose.

## Do I have to pay for this medicine?

PharmaCare covers the cost of Suboxone for all residents of British Columbia. Please talk to your prescriber or pharmacist if you have questions about this.

## How do I take Suboxone?

- You take it one time each day.
  - Try to take Suboxone **at the same time every day**. To help you remember, use a reminder alert or alarm.
  - Put tablets under your tongue and let them dissolve. *It will not work if you swallow the tablets.* Talk to your pharmacist if you swallow a tablet by accident.
  - Wait 10 to 15 minutes for tablets to dissolve completely before drinking, eating, or smoking.
- \* Suboxone can cause tooth decay. Rinse your mouth with water after the dose completely dissolves. Wait one hour before brushing your teeth.



## What do I do if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose, try to take it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip your missed dose and return to your regular schedule.

If it has been 6 or more days in a row since you last took Suboxone, talk to your prescriber.

## What else should I know?

*What if I use opioids?* Suboxone might partly block the effects of other opioids. It does not completely protect you from opioid overdoses. Make sure you have, or someone around you has, a naloxone kit. Try not to use opioids alone.

*What if I have opioid withdrawal or cravings while taking Suboxone?* Call your prescriber right away.

*What about taking other medicines?* Always check with your prescriber or pharmacist before taking any new medicines, including medicines you get with or without a prescription, herbal medicines, and supplements.

## What should I look out for?

### Common Side Effects



1. **Upset stomach**

This should improve over time.

Talk to your pharmacist if you throw up before the tablets dissolve completely. You might need to take an extra dose.



2. **Stomach ache or constipation**

Drink plenty of water.

Talk to your prescriber or pharmacist if this does not go away after 2 to 3 days.



3. **Headache**

This should improve over time.

Talk to your prescriber or pharmacist if it continues to bother you.



4. **Sweating a lot**

You might notice more sweating that is not related to heat or exercise.

Talk to your prescriber or pharmacist if this continues to bother you.

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### Rare but Serious Side Effects

1. **Liver or other organ problems**

Your prescriber might ask you to go for blood tests to check how well your liver and other organs are working before and after starting this medicine.

2. **Serotonin syndrome**

This can happen when there is too much of a brain chemical, called serotonin, in your body.

Early symptoms include feeling confused or agitated, muscle twitching, sweating, shivering, or diarrhea.

Serious symptoms include a very high fever, seizures, heart skipping beats, or blacking out.

**Go to the nearest Emergency** if you notice any early symptoms. **Call 911** if you have any serious symptoms.

## When should I get help?

### See your prescriber as soon as possible in these situations:

- You continue to crave opioids.
- You are bothered by any of the side effects.
- You have any questions or concerns about this medicine or your opioid use.

If you do not have a prescriber, or they are not available, visit the closest **Rapid Access Addiction Clinic**:

Abbotsford	102-32463 Simon Avenue Phone: 604-851-3752
Chilliwack	45600 Menholm Road Phone: 604-703-6976
Mission	7298 Hurd Street Phone: 604-814-5625
New Westminster	330 East Columbia Street Phone: 604-520-4253
Surrey	13740 – 94A Avenue Phone: 604-587-3755 (Option 3)
Vancouver	2nd floor, 1081 Burrard Street Phone: 604-806-8867
Victoria	1119 Pembroke Street Phone: 250-591-3776

### Call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Room if:

- You notice any symptoms of serotonin syndrome.
- You notice any of these signs of an allergic reaction: rash, hives, swelling of the face, tongue, or throat, trouble breathing.
- You use other opioids, and you feel like you are either very intoxicated or in bad withdrawal (dope sick).

## It's good to ask questions

Anytime you have any questions or concerns about taking this medicine, talk with your health care team.

**Call 811** (HealthLinkBC) after hours, and for any health or medicine advice.

HealthLinkBC is open 24 hours a day and available in 130 languages. For an interpreter, say your language in English. Wait until an interpreter comes on the phone.

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.