

buprenorphine-naloxone (Suboxone) and Opioid Agonist Treatment Clinics

We have given you information on buprenorphine-naloxone (Suboxone).

We also gave you a supply or prescription for this medication to get you through to your first appointment at an Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT) Clinic.

What do I need to do?

1. If you have a supply, carefully follow the instructions for taking the medications.
2. If you have a prescription, get the prescription filled at your local pharmacy.
Make sure you have your BC Services Card or BC CareCard (PHN) and photo identification.
3. Book an appointment at one of the Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT) Clinics.

Any problems contacting an OAT Clinic? Have other substance use concerns?
Call the **Substance Use Service Access Team (SUSAT): 1-866-624-6478**

Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT) Clinics

Abbotsford #203 - 31943 South Fraser Way 604-743-0543	Maple Ridge #106 - 22838 Lougheed Highway 604-467-5179	Surrey 13740 - 94A Avenue 604-587-3755 (option 3)
Burnaby 3935 Kincaid Street 604-453-1930	Mission 3rd Floor, 7298 Hurd Street 604-814-5600	10667 - 135A Street 604-583-5666
Chilliwack 45600 Menholm Road 604-703-6976	Port Moody 700 - 220 Brew Street 604-777-8709	Vancouver 1081 Burrard Street St. Paul's Hospital 2nd floor 604-806-8867
Langley #305-20300 Fraser Highway 604-514-7940		White Rock 15521 Russell Avenue, Russell Unit 604-541-6844

What is opioid agonist therapy?

Opioid agonist treatment (OAT) is an effective way to treat people addicted to opioid drugs such as heroin, oxycodone, hydromorphone (Dilaudid), fentanyl, and Percocet. This therapy involves taking opioid agonists such as buprenorphine-naloxone (Suboxone).

Buprenorphine-naloxone is the same medicine as Suboxone. It is a type of OAT.

Opioid agonists work to prevent withdrawal and reduce cravings for opioid drugs. People who are addicted to opioids can take OAT to help stabilize their lives and to reduce the harms related to their drug use.

How does this therapy work?

Buprenorphine is a 'long-acting' opioid medication. This means the medication acts more slowly in the body, for a longer time.

By acting slowly, it prevents withdrawal for 24 to 36 hours. At the right dose, OAT also helps reduce or get rid of cravings for opioids. The OAT Clinic will help you find the right dose. You might have a higher chance of success if you also attend counselling or get other support.

How will this therapy make me feel?

When you first start treatment, you might feel lightheaded or sleepy for a few days, but you will quickly tolerate these effects.

OAT can help to keep the physical withdrawal symptoms and cravings away. Once you're on a stable dose of OAT, you should feel 'normal' and be able to focus your life on other aspects of your life—like work, family or school—and taking care of yourself.

Because OAT is a long-acting medication, it can take 4 to 5 days for you to feel the full effect of any adjustment in your dose.

How do I take this therapy?

Buprenorphine (Suboxone) is a pill that is absorbed under the tongue. It includes naloxone, which can cause withdrawal if it is injected.

Naloxone is added to ensure people take Suboxone as prescribed and discourage misuse.

Your doctor will give you a prescription for your OAT to take to a pharmacy. When you first start on OAT, you will be asked to go to your pharmacy each day to take the medication. You can begin to take home some doses once your treatment and life are stable.

Are there any safety risks with this therapy?

Trained healthcare professionals follow strict guidelines to deliver buprenorphine-naloxone (Suboxone) as OAT. Thorough research has been done on these medications to establish their safe use. People take OAT for years without any ill effects.

However, buprenorphine-naloxone (Suboxone) is a prescribed opioid medication **for you**. It can be extremely dangerous if taken by someone who it was not prescribed for. Never sell or give away any of your dose. Children are particularly at risk. Even a small amount can be fatal for a child. Always store your medication in a locked box.

All opioids have a risk of overdose. Mixing any opioids with other medications, substances, and/or alcohol can increase the chances of an overdose.

Early signs of overdose include problems with co-ordination and balance, trouble speaking, slurring, and feeling sleepy or 'nodding off' throughout the day. Advanced signs include bluish colour in the lips and fingers, eyes with very small pupils, not being able to wake up, deep snoring or gurgling sounds and slow, uneven breathing. Any signs of overdose should be treated as a medical emergency: **Call 9-1-1!**

Naloxone is a medication that can reduce the effects of overdose temporarily and allow time for medical help to arrive. It is now available in a kit for injection or as a nasal spray. Anyone who takes opioids should have naloxone on hand for friends or family to administer in an emergency. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or public health unit where you can get naloxone.

Adapted from 'Opioid agonist therapy' (2016) with permission from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (www.camh.ca)

www.fraserhealth.ca

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