

## **Patient FAQ's and information regarding Subutex (buprenorphine) and Suboxone (buprenorphine/naloxone):**

- 1) **What is buprenorphine?** It is a long-acting opiate that can be safely used to prevent cravings and withdrawal.
- 2) **What is naloxone?** It is a medication used to reverse the effects of opioids and can trigger withdrawal.
- 3) **Must I be in withdrawal before starting Suboxone/Subutex?** Yes, you must be in moderate withdrawal. **Why?** Suboxone/Subutex has a milder opioid effect but a stronger attraction than other opioids to the receptors in your brain. If you were to start Suboxone with drugs in your system, the Suboxone would immediately displace the other opioids from your receptors and throw you into full blown withdrawal. By starting Suboxone while in moderate withdrawal, your brain will still have receptor sites available for Suboxone to bind to without immediately clearing out the other drugs and thus, you should not experience precipitated withdrawal.
- 4) **Why does Suboxone/Subutex have to dissolve under my tongue?** If it is swallowed or chewed, it is not absorbed in the stomach and will have no effect. Generally, you must allow about 10 minutes for it to fully dissolve and you should not brush your teeth, eat/drink, or talk too much while it is dissolving.
- 5) **What if Suboxone/Subutex makes me sick?** Contact our clinic to schedule an appointment to discuss your medication & dosing. However, if it is severe or life threatening, please seek medical attention immediately.
- 6) **How long will the effects of Suboxone/Subutex last?** Suboxone & Subutex can stay in your system for approximately 3-5 days depending on your metabolism, weight, tolerance, etc....
- 7) **How do I stop taking Suboxone/Subutex?** When you and your physician have discussed it and feel that you are ready, you will be given instructions to taper your dosage in a way to prevent withdrawal and eventually come off of the medication completely. Do not stop taking Suboxone/Subutex "cold-turkey" as it may result in withdrawal.
- 8) **How long will I need to be on Suboxone/Subutex?** A lot of that depends on you and many other factors. It is recommended to continue treatment for at least six months to be successful. However, there are many patients who feel it's necessary for themselves to continue treatment for a much longer duration. This is something that should be discussed frequently with your physician as your lifetime sobriety is the ultimate goal of the program.
- 9) **Can I work while taking Suboxone/Subutex?** Some drowsiness will occur during the first day or two, but it usually subsides with time.

**10) What will happen if I miss a dose?** This medication has a fairly long half-life; therefore, you should not go into withdrawal. Take your next dose as scheduled. (However, if you should experience any withdrawal symptoms soon after your missed dose, you can go ahead and take the missed dose.)

**11) What will happen if I use drugs while on Suboxone/Subutex?** If suboxone or subutex are in your system, the typical effects of other opioid drugs will be blocked. This does not mean that it is okay to take other drugs while on Suboxone/Subutex as this is counterproductive to any progress you might have made.

## **Medication Information**

Suboxone/Subutex are generally well-tolerated medications, but may have minor side effects that are not generally life-threatening.

### Common side effects include:

nausea/vomiting, constipation, sweats, headache, drowsiness, bad taste in mouth, and dental staining (generally in conjunction with prior dental issues)

### Drug interactions:

Most other medications do not interact with Suboxone/Subutex with exception to benzodiazepines such as Xanax, Ativan, Valium, Klonopin, etc... which may cause a patient to experience seizures.

### Other medical issues:

Allergic reaction is rare. Patient should seek immediate medical care and notify us ASAP.

***If you are a patient with liver disease,*** you should make sure that our clinic is aware as it may require you to have periodic labs to carefully monitor your liver function.

***If you are a patient who has suffered from a head injury,*** you should also make sure that our clinic is aware as Suboxone/Subutex may increase intracranial pressure and will require monitoring and/or intervention.