

BUPRENORPHINE TREATMENT OVERVIEW

What Is Buprenorphine?

Buprenorphine is a medication that has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD) since 2002.¹ Buprenorphine is a partial opioid agonist, which means that its effects do not continue to increase even with increased dosage.¹ Buprenorphine can be prescribed or dispensed in **outpatient healthcare settings** (e.g., primary care practice), community hospitals, or correctional facilities.¹ Physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners can prescribe buprenorphine. Providers must attend a DATA 2000 waiver training (8 to 24 hours total) and be able to refer patients to **counseling and other supportive services** in order to prescribe buprenorphine for the treatment of OUD.¹⁻³ Physician assistants and nurse practitioners must work in collaboration with a physician who is waived to prescribe buprenorphine.

What Are the Benefits of Buprenorphine Treatment?

Buprenorphine treatment can:

- **Stabilize abnormal brain activity** by:^{3,4}
 - Blocking the euphoric effects of opioids;
 - Relieving physiological cravings; and
 - Normalizing body functions.
- Allow patients to focus on **behavioral therapies**;^{3,4}
- Increase periods of **abstinence and self-efficacy**;³
- **Enhance clinical outcomes** for patients and reduce impact of substance use on their family and loved ones;⁵
- Improve **maternal and fetal outcomes** among pregnant women; and⁶
- **Lower HCV infection rates** in adults who inject drugs compared to other treatments and detoxification alone.⁷

Is Buprenorphine Treatment Effective?

Buprenorphine and methadone have been found to be **equally effective** in increasing treatment retention, reducing opioid use, and increasing MOUD treatment and counseling adherence and attendance.^{8,9}

Research indicates that patients receiving **buprenorphine had reductions of**:⁷⁻¹³

- | | |
|---|---|
| 20% - 60% in positive drug tests | 25% - 86% in sharing injection equipment |
| 32% - 69% in illicit opioid use | 20% - 60% in injection drug use |

Research has found that patients who received longer term buprenorphine treatment (at least 18 months) were:⁵

- Less likely to report:
 - Current substance misuse (e.g., heroin);
 - Report damaging a close relationship;
 - Doing regretful or impulsive things; and
- More likely to report:
 - Attending support groups regularly;
 - Being employed; and
 - Increased psychosocial functioning.

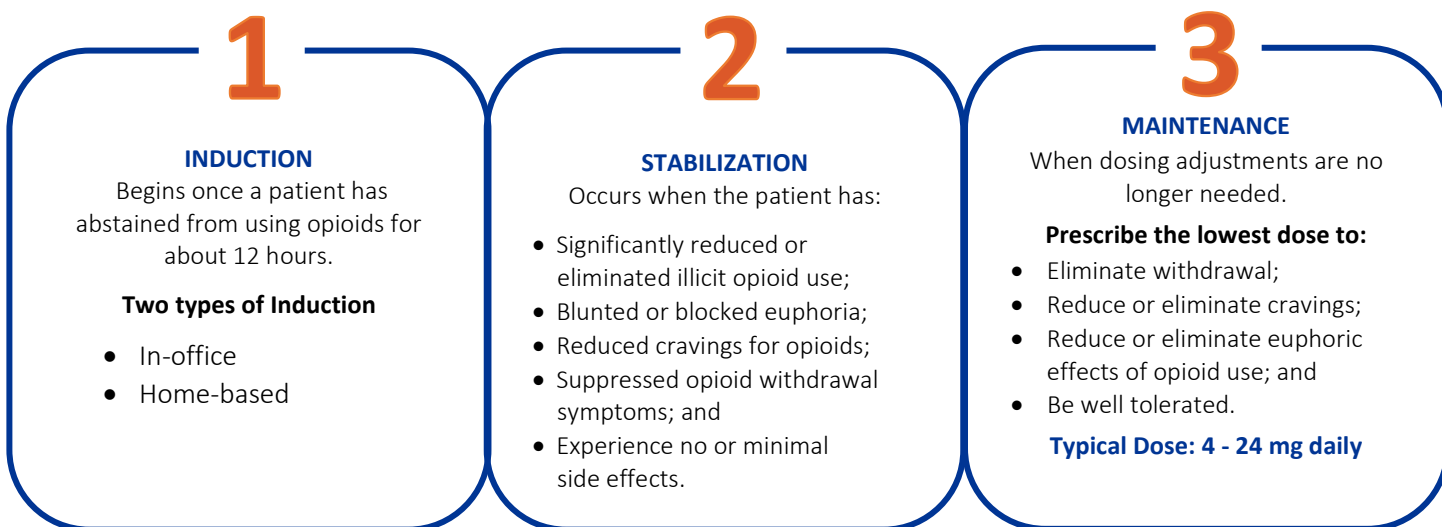
Who Is a Candidate for Buprenorphine Treatment?

Buprenorphine treatment may be appropriate for patients with the following characteristics:¹⁻³

- Currently physically dependent on opioids;
- Currently diagnosed with OUD or with a history of OUD;
- High risk of recurrence of use or strong opioid cravings;
- History of overdose(s);
- Limited social supports; and
- Require chronic opioid treatment.

Buprenorphine Treatment Phases

Buprenorphine treatment includes three phases: induction, stabilization, and maintenance.¹⁻³



What If a Client Experiences a Recurrence of Use?

A return to the use of illicit substances is a **natural occurrence throughout a patient's treatment and recovery process**. It is important to provide support for patients' re-engagement with treatment, use motivational interviewing techniques to discuss the recurrence with the patient, and ensure the patient has appropriate support services.³ Some patients may require a higher level of care or another type of medication (e.g., methadone) that can better support that individual in their recovery. Each practitioner should **optimize support services** and reassess patients/clients regularly throughout the course of treatment and during periods of recurrence of use.

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