



WHAT IS BUPRENORPHINE?

Addiction is a chronic disease of the brain and it should be treated as such. Buprenorphine is a medication used to treat opioid addiction. Opioids are drugs such as heroin, opium, morphine, codeine, oxycodone, hydrocodone, fentanyl etc., which can be abused and lead to tolerance and dependence. This means that the user's body becomes accustomed to ever-higher amounts, and, when the drug is stopped, there are symptoms of withdrawal. Even after the worst physical part of withdrawal is over, some patients still don't feel right for a long time and may relapse to using drugs again, just to "feel normal."

Buprenorphine helps to "trick the brain" subsequently avoiding the physical symptoms of withdrawal. Additionally, it lessens cravings tremendously, allowing patients a better quality of life.

Maintenance medication has a slower onset of action and longer duration of effects on the brain than heroin or other drugs of abuse. This allows for a steadying of brain function that is part of treatment. The best way to use buprenorphine in maintenance treatment is for the provider and patient to work together to find the correct dose, where the patient feels normal, and keep that dose steady. This means taking the medication on a regular schedule as prescribed, in the same way as taking a blood pressure medication, or diabetes treatment.

Suboxone has a small amount of naloxone (Narcan) in it, which is an opioid antagonist. The purpose of the naloxone is to discourage illicit injection of the pill. The patient would not feel the effects of naloxone by mouth, but if the pill is dissolved and injected, it can cause significant opioid withdrawal.