

Naloxone is an opioid antagonist. It is used to treat overdose because it knocks all other opiates (heroin, methadone, buprenorphine etc) off the receptors in the brain. The effects last for 15–20 minutes only.

If you inject or snort Naloxone after taking an opioid you will get a sudden and severe withdrawal reaction.

Naloxone is not absorbed into the body from under the tongue. As long as you allow Suboxone tablets to dissolve under the tongue it will not reduce the effect of the Buprenorphine in any way.

Buprenorphine is a long-acting opioid. It is used in the treatment of opioid dependence because it will "hold you" and stop you going into withdrawal.

Buprenorphine is more strongly attracted to the opiate receptors in the brain than heroin or methadone. It sticks very tightly to these receptors for a long time and can be taken just **once daily**.

Taking heroin on top will have little or no effect because it can't get to the receptors to stimulate them. Buprenorphine will also replace heroin or methadone that you have already taken, "kicking" them off the opiate receptors.

It is important that there is no heroin or methadone already in your body or you will experience immediate withdrawal symptoms.

Suboxone is the brand name for a tablet containing **Buprenorphine** and **Naloxone**. It is used to treat people dependant on heroin or other opiates such as codeine or dihydrocodeine.

It will help you:

- Stop using heroin
- Stop injecting
- Improve your physical health and nutrition
- Stop committing crime to get money for drugs
- Have more stable relationships with friends and family

The tablets must be allowed to dissolve under the tongue

If you swallow or chew the tablets most of the buprenorphine is destroyed by the liver and will not get into your bloodstream.

You will feel some effects 30 to 60 minutes after taking your dose, and the full effect after 1 to 4 hours. Your first dose of Suboxone may cause withdrawal symptoms if you have any other opioid in your body.

You must wait at least 8 hours after taking heroin or 24 - 36 hours after taking methadone (or until you have significant withdrawal symptoms) before you take your first dose of Suboxone.

FAQs

How will Suboxone make me feel?

You might feel a little rough for the first 2-3 days while the medicine levels build up in your body. After that you should have less and less craving for heroin, and feel more in control and clear headed. You will lose the "clouding" effect of heroin or methadone.

What are the side effects?

The side effects of Suboxone are similar to the side effects of all opioids. The ones most often reported with Suboxone tend to happen in the first few days and are abdominal pain, diarrhoea, muscle aches, anxiety and sweating.

What does it taste of?

Suboxone has a lemon-lime flavour.

Can I use other drugs too?

It is very dangerous to mix Suboxone with "benzos" (like diazepam & temazepam) or alcohol. There's a danger of overdose if you do.

Can I drive on Suboxone?

Like all opioids Suboxone can make you drowsy and slow down your reaction time. This happens especially

- In the first few weeks of treatment
- When the dose is increased
- If you use alcohol and sedatives on top

If you hold a current driving licence and intend to drive, you must inform the DVLA and complete form DG1. There should be no evidence of continued use of other substances, including cannabis.

Addiction Services



Suboxone






This leaflet will give you some information about treatment with Suboxone.





Please ask your doctor, nurse, drug worker or pharmacist if you have any questions or worries.

If you would like a copy of this leaflet in a different community language or alternative formats such as Braille, easy read or CD, please contact the equality & diversity lead by telephone on: 01383 565142 or by email at: fife-uhb.equalityanddiversity@nhs.net

HOW TO TAKE SUBOXONE

1. **NO**  ,  ,  or  for at least  before dose.

2.  **Moisten mouth with water** →  **Put under tongue** →  →  **Sshh!** for 

3.  **Tablets dissolved leaving chalky powder** →  **Rinse and swallow** →  for  **24 hours**

- Chewing gum can help lubricate the mouth but must be removed and put in the bin before taking your dose.
- Take your tablets as a single dose at the same time each day
- Put the tablets **under your tongue** and wait until they dissolve—if you swallow them you won't get the full effect.

You should not take Suboxone :

- **If you are allergic to buprenorphine.**
If you come out in a rash or itchy skin tell the doctor or nurse.
- **If you are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning to get pregnant.**
There is not enough research on the use of Suboxone by pregnant and breastfeeding women to say clearly that it is as safe as methadone.
If you become pregnant while taking Suboxone, you can transfer to another treatment option.
It is important that your opioid dependence is under control during pregnancy.
- **If you are taking other medication or drugs.**
It is dangerous to mix Suboxone with drugs such as:
 - Sleeping pills and tranquillisers
 - Antidepressants
 - Alcohol
 - Other opioids (such as morphine, pethidine, methadone, or codeine)Mixing these drugs can lead to drowsiness, sedation, unconsciousness and death.
Tell your doctor if you are taking other medication or other drugs.
- **If you have other health issues such as:**
 - Severe breathing problems
 - Recent severe head injury
 - Severe abdominal pain

Overdose

Taken on its own Suboxone is not as dangerous as heroin or methadone in overdose. However, people have died taking Suboxone with alcohol or tranquillisers ("benzos"). Reduce your risk of an overdose by going to an **overdose prevention training session** with a friend or family member. Information is available at www.fifedirect.org.uk/fifeadp or ask your doctor, drug worker or pharmacist for details

Misuse

Misusing Suboxone (i.e. injecting or snorting) has a similar effect to injecting or snorting naloxone on its own.

An opioid dependant person can have a sudden withdrawal reaction.

This may include cravings, anxiety, restlessness, nausea, sweating, stomach pains and diarrhoea. The withdrawal reaction would be severe for 30 minutes and then drop away over several hours or longer.

Safe Storage of take-home doses

Suboxone contains a very strong opioid, and **must only be taken as directed by the person it was prescribed for.**

Suboxone is very harmful if taken by children accidentally.

Take-home doses must be stored out of reach and sight of children and other people, preferably in a locked cupboard.