

Suboxone Information and Treatment Policies

Suboxone is a highly effective opioid replacement medication for people who are dependent on opioids such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, methadone, and heroin. Suboxone is a partial opioid agonist that blocks other opioids from attaching to receptors in the brain. Suboxone contains Naloxone, an opioid antagonist that has no effect when the Suboxone is taken as directed but which is activated if the person injects or snorts a full opioid agonist such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, or heroin. The Naloxone is present in the Suboxone to deter a person from using Suboxone inappropriately as it causes rapid withdrawal symptoms. Subutex, another opioid replacement medication, does not contain Naloxone. It may be used when someone has an adverse reaction to the Naloxone or in pregnant women.

Suboxone and Subutex suppress symptoms of opioid withdrawal, reduce cravings for opioids, reduce illicit opioid use, block the effects of other opioids, and help patients stay in treatment. It is important for patients to have other supports along with medication such as counseling or involvement in 12 Step programs.

Correct usage of Suboxone and Subutex requires that the patient dissolve the medication under the tongue. It is not effective if it is swallowed, and Suboxone initiates withdrawal symptoms if it is snorted or injected. If used improperly (snorted or injected) and with an excess of other depressants such as tranquilizers, sedatives, benzodiazapines, or alcohol, it may cause death.

Commonly reported side effects of Suboxone are: headache, withdrawal syndrome, pain, insomnia, nausea, and constipation. It can cause your blood pressure to drop. It can cause tiredness. If you experience any of these symptoms, discuss them with your doctor.

Dr. Robert Benjamin is licensed to prescribe Suboxone in a private office setting. Lynn Benjamin, M.Ed., CACD, LMFT provides substance abuse counseling. If you decide to start in treatment with Suboxone with us, we ask that you read the following policies and sign the consent to follow them:

1) Follow the doctor's directions for the use of Suboxone. After determining the appropriate dosage, be sure that you take the initial dose while in withdrawal from the opioid that you are dependent on. *If Suboxone is started while not in withdrawal, it will clash with other opioids and cause uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms rather than relief from withdrawal feelings.*

Allow the tablet to dissolve under the tongue.

Do not swallow the tablets or you will not get sufficient relief.

Do not snort or inject the tablets or you will go into withdrawal from the Naloxone component in the tablet.

Do not take other opioids while taking Suboxone.

Do not use sedatives, benzodiazapines, some antidepressants or tranquilizers while on Suboxone unless under the supervision of your doctor. Do not drink alcohol while on Suboxone.

Do not share your prescription for Suboxone or Subutex with others. Sharing your medication is illegal.

Keep your medication out of the reach of children.

Protect your medication by only carrying the amount you will be using with you. Do not travel with the whole bottle of your medication.

2) You must be seen in our office by Dr. Benjamin and Lynn Benjamin a minimum of once per month while you are taking Suboxone. You may decide to schedule additional sessions for support or you may arrange counseling support at another facility between sessions. We strongly recommend that you attend a 12 Step program.

3) We encourage you to permit us to share information with your family doctor or any other counselor you are seeing to coordinate your care. It is very important that your doctor know that you are on Suboxone so that the doctor does not prescribe medications that would clash with it. The same is true for your dentist if pain medications are being considered.

4) Each person's course of treatment on Suboxone is different. We encourage patients to remain on Suboxone for enough time to remove themselves from the lifestyle that supports dependency.

5) Pregnant women need to discuss with their doctor the benefits vs. the risks of taking Subutex during pregnancy. Suboxone is not recommended for pregnant women.

6) Suboxone is not approved for use by adolescents younger than sixteen years.

7) Suboxone is not approved for pain. If pain is an issue, discuss with us appropriate measures to deal with it.

8) If you lose your Suboxone or run short before the next visit, it is up to the discretion of Dr. Benjamin whether he can justify calling the pharmacy to try to order more. If a pattern of losing medication between visits develops, you must make an appointment to discuss the situation before Dr. Benjamin will consider refilling the medication.

Suboxone and Subutex are carefully controlled substances with strict rules about their use. Pharmacies may be reluctant to replace or fill prescriptions earlier than previously ordered. A patient cannot rely on a pharmacy's willingness to fill prescriptions irregularly. Insurance companies may require prior authorization to pay for Suboxone or Subutex and may regulate conditions for its prescription.

In committing to Suboxone Replacement Treatment with counseling, you are committing to changing your current lifestyle in favor of a more healthful way to live. Your signature below indicates that you have read and agree to abide by the policies of our practice in order to participate in Suboxone/Subutex Replacement Treatment.

Patient _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____