

Buprenorphine Formulation Myths and Facts: Understanding Suboxone vs. Subutex

Suboxone™ or buprenorphine-naloxone is an FDA approved medicine for the treatment of opioid use disorder.

This medicine contains a combination of buprenorphine (active ingredient) and naloxone (inactive ingredient, unless injected). Suboxone™ and methadone are first-line treatments for opioid use disorder. Subutex™ or buprenorphine mono-product is *only* recommended in pregnant or lactating individuals or if someone has a documented allergy to naloxone. **For most people, there is no difference between how their bodies feel when they take buprenorphine-naloxone (Suboxone™) and buprenorphine mono-product (Subutex™).**

There is a commonly held misconception that the naloxone contained in Suboxone™ is absorbed and causes withdrawal symptoms or commonly causes hypersensitivity or allergic reactions. Please see below for more information:

- Naloxone is not absorbed through the walls of the mouth, or under the tongue. When used correctly and placed under the tongue, naloxone does not cause opioid withdrawal symptoms.
- Most adverse events from either medication are due to precipitated withdrawal, which is can happen if buprenorphine (*not* naloxone) is used too soon after using opioids. Buprenorphine is the active ingredient in both Subutex™ and Suboxone™.
- Naloxone is added to Suboxone™ solely to discourage misuse via injection. If Suboxone™ is injected, both the buprenorphine and naloxone are absorbed, head to the brain, and result in precipitated opioid withdrawal symptoms.
- True allergies and/or hypersensitivities to naloxone are extremely rare. Allergic reactions include difficulty breathing, swelling of the face, lips, tongue or throat and hives.
- Patients taking buprenorphine without naloxone (Subutex™) have less access to treatment options due to greater discomfort of medical providers and clinics in prescribing buprenorphine mono-product. For this reason, we recommend patients be on Suboxone™ or buprenorphine-naloxone.

