

# Sublocade Treatment: What to Know and Expect

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## WHAT IS SUBLOCADE?

- Sublocade is one way of taking **buprenorphine**, a medication used to treat addiction to opioids (heroin, fentanyl, or pain pills). Many people know buprenorphine by the brand name Suboxone, which is a tablet taken daily under the tongue.
- Sublocade is buprenorphine taken as a monthly injection. Once injected into the body, the liquid buprenorphine turns into a solid gel, called a **depot**. The depot gradually releases buprenorphine at a steady rate throughout the month.

## WHAT IS IT LIKE TO TAKE SUBLOCADE?

- A health care professional will give you the medication as an injection in your abdomen every four weeks.
- The injection may be uncomfortable. Some people describe a hot or burning feeling when the medication is injected under the skin. Using an ice pack on the area before and after the injection usually helps to make it less painful.
- After the injection, the medication forms a small bump under the skin. The bump can last from four weeks up to a few months, but it will gradually go away.
- After the injection, some people feel a little bit sleepy. Most people feel completely normal. Over the month, most people feel very level and don't notice any withdrawal symptoms.
- If you miss a dose, it can be given up to two weeks late.

## IS SUBLOCADE RIGHT FOR ME?

- Sublocade can be taken by people who have been on Suboxone for at least one week at a dose of 8mg or more.
- Sublocade can be a good choice for people who...
  - ...don't want to attend a pharmacy every day or every week.
  - ...travel frequently.
  - ...experience withdrawal symptoms or cravings on Suboxone.
  - ...don't like the taste or feel of Suboxone.
- Sublocade is not considered to be safe in pregnancy because of the gel added to the buprenorphine. People who could become pregnant should only use Sublocade if they're using an effective form of birth control, and should have a pregnancy test before each injection unless they have a long-term birth control method, like an IUD.

## HOW ARE SUBLOCADE AND SUBOXONE DIFFERENT?

	SUBLOCADE	SUBOXONE
How it's taken	Monthly injection	Daily pill taken under the tongue
Side effects	Can cause soreness and a bump where the needle goes in	Can cause nausea or dry mouth, may taste bad
Starting	Must be on a daily Suboxone dose of at least 8mg for at least a week	Must be in opioid withdrawal before starting (unless microdosing)
Dose	300mg for two months, then 100mg	Daily doses range from 2mg to 24mg
Withdrawal	Mild symptoms may occur 4 weeks after injection	Symptoms often happen 24 hours after a dose
Missed doses	If an injection is missed, it can be given up to 2 weeks late without changing the dose	If more than a week is missed, the dose will need to be adjusted

## WHAT IF I TAKE OPIOIDS WHILE I'M ON SUBLOCADE?

- Taking another opioid while taking Sublocade will not make you sick.
- Sublocade can be helpful for people who continue to use opioids:
  - Because taking Sublocade will help control your cravings and withdrawal symptoms, you won't **have to** keep using your usual opioid to avoid being sick. You can still take it if you **want to**, but it becomes your choice.
  - Sublocade makes you less likely to die of an overdose if you keep using opioids.

## WHAT ELSE CAN I DO TO STAY SAFER?

- Never use opioids alone; go to a safe consumption site, use with a friend, or contact the [National Overdose Response Service](#).
- Make sure you can recognize the signs of overdose: pinpoint pupils, falling asleep, slowed or stopped breathing, bluish skin around lips or under nails.
- Always carry naloxone.
- If you haven't taken opioids for even a few days, take a much smaller dose than you are used to.
- Get your drugs checked before using.
- If you can't get your drugs checked, start with a test dose.
- Don't mix opioids with other substances, especially alcohol or benzos.
- If you inject or smoke drugs, use new supplies each and every time, including sterile cookers and filters, sterile water, mouthpieces, bowls, and screens. Supplies are available through your [local harm reduction program](#).