

# Sublocade Treatment: What to Know and Expect

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## WHAT IS SUBLOCADE?

- Sublocade (or *the shot*) 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 the brand name for buprenorphine taken as a monthly injection. Once injected, 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 provider 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. 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, most people feel completely normal, but some people feel a little bit sleepy for a few days. Over the month, most people feel very level and don't notice any withdrawal symptoms. If you do notice withdrawal symptoms, tell your health care provider.
- If you miss a dose, it can be given up to two weeks late.

## IS SUBLOCADE RIGHT FOR ME?

- Sublocade can be a good choice for people who...
  - ...don't want to attend a pharmacy every day or every week.
  - ...travel frequently.
  - ...don't like the taste or feel of Suboxone.
  - ...experience withdrawal symptoms or cravings on Suboxone. (The concentration of buprenorphine in the blood is higher and more constant with Sublocade than with Suboxone. This means it may be more effective at relieving withdrawal symptoms and cravings, especially in people who have higher opioid tolerance, such as those who use fentanyl.)
- Sublocade can be given to people who take at least 8 mg of Suboxone daily.
- Sublocade is not recommended for people who are pregnant. Talk to your health care provider about birth control and pregnancy testing before starting Sublocade.

## HOW ARE SUBLOCADE AND SUBOXONE DIFFERENT?

	SUBLOCADE	SUBOXONE
<b>How it's taken</b>	Monthly injection.	Daily pill under the tongue.
<b>Side effects</b>	Can cause soreness and a bump where the needle goes in.  Like all opioids, can cause nausea, constipation, or sedation.	Can cause nausea or dry mouth, may have an unpleasant taste.  Like all opioids, can cause nausea, constipation, or sedation.
<b>Starting</b>	Must be on a Suboxone dose of at least 8 mg before starting.  Starts working within 1–2 days.	How it's started and the dose are adjusted based on opioid use.  Can take a few days to find the right dose.
<b>Dose</b>	Injections every 28 days.  300 mg for the first 2 injections, then 100 mg.  No pharmacy pick-up required.	Usually taken once a day.  Doses range from 2 mg to 24 mg.  Medication is typically picked up from a pharmacy every 1–4 weeks.
<b>Withdrawal</b>	Sometimes mild symptoms in the days before the next injection (usually only during the first month).	Symptoms are often noticeable 24 hours after a dose or when the next dose is due.
<b>Missed doses</b>	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 may need to be adjusted.

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

- Taking an opioid while on Sublocade **won't** make you sick.
- People usually find that they get less of a high when they take other opioids while on Sublocade. Some people like this because it makes them less tempted to use opioids.
- Sublocade can be helpful for people who continue to use opioids:
  - Because Sublocade helps to control cravings and withdrawal symptoms, you won't have to keep taking 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.