

Appendix L. Guidance on prescribing buprenorphine in pregnancy

What is buprenorphine?

- Buprenorphine is an opioid medication used to treat opioid addiction. Buprenorphine can be dispensed for take home use, by prescription. Physicians must take Waiver Training in order to prescribe or dispense.
- Buprenorphine is an opioid partial agonist. It produces typical opioid agonist effects and side effects, but its maximal effects are less than those of full agonists like heroin and methadone. At low doses buprenorphine produces sufficient agonist effect to block withdrawal symptoms. The agonist effects of buprenorphine increase linearly with increasing doses of the drug until at moderate doses there is a “ceiling effect.” Thus, buprenorphine carries a lower risk of abuse, addiction, and side effects compared to full opioid agonists.
- Buprenorphine is available in a variety of formulations including Suboxone®, Subutex®, Zubsolv® and can be a single ingredient product or it can be mixed with naloxone to create a combination ingredient product. Naloxone formulations render the combination product less conducive to misuse (e.g. injection).
- The following fact sheet from the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides an overview of buprenorphine treatment:
http://attcnetwork.org/projects/documents/poats/POATS_Buprenorphine_FactSheet.pdf

Is buprenorphine safe during pregnancy?

- Studies have found that treatment with buprenorphine has similar outcomes to methadone treatment during pregnancy.
 - <http://pcssmat.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/PCSS-MATGuidancePregnancy-and-Buprenorphine.Martin.pdf>
 - Meyer MC1, Johnston AM, Crocker AM, Heil SH. *J Addict Med.* 2015 Jan 22. [Epub ahead of print] Methadone and Buprenorphine for Opioid Dependence During Pregnancy: A Retrospective Cohort Study.

Where can I find information on how to become a buprenorphine provider?

- Qualified physicians can receive a waiver from the special registration requirements in the Controlled Substances Act for the provision of medication-assisted opioid addiction treatment. This waiver allows qualifying physicians to prescribe medication-assisted treatment for opioid addiction with Schedule III, IV, or V narcotic medications specifically approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) which includes buprenorphine.
- Physician Waiver Qualifications can be found at http://buprenorphine.samhsa.gov/waiver_qualifications.html
- ASAM, APA, and AAAP all offer 8-hour online training for physicians to complete the training requirement for CSAT certification to prescribe buprenorphine in office-based treatment of opioid-dependent patients

How can I find buprenorphine providers?

- SAMHSA has a Physician and Treatment Program Locator (http://buprenorphine.samhsa.gov/bwns_locator/)
- The National Alliance of Advocates for Buprenorphine Treatment offers a few different options for locating physicians and programs (<http://www.naabt.org/tl/buprenorphine-suboxone-treatment.cfm>)

Links

- <http://buprenorphine.samhsa.gov/>
- <http://pcssmat.org/>
- <http://pcss-o.org/>
- <http://buprenorphine.samhsa.gov/otherlinks.html>