



BUPRENORPHINE-NALOXONE (SUBOXONE®) MICRODOSING INDUCTION Information for the Pharmacist

What is buprenorphine-naloxone microdosing?

- In the context of opioid agonist therapy (OAT), buprenorphine-naloxone microdosing induction is an alternative method to the standard, off-label induction method, which relies on the repeated administration of low doses of buprenorphine-naloxone, concomitantly with the other opioids used.¹ Consumption of the other opioids will be discontinued gradually, or after 7-13 days.
 - ⇨ The slow accumulation of buprenorphine at mu type (μ) opioid receptors allows for the gradual replacement of pure opioid agonists by buprenorphine without causing significant withdrawal symptoms.¹
- The usual average microdosing period is 7 or 13 days, compared with 2 days for standard induction protocols.²⁻⁵ See the prescription.

Why use this induction technique?

- Microdosing can be used to:
 - ⇨ Initiate buprenorphine-based OAT in an individual taking opioids (whether prescribed or not);^{4,5}
 - ⇨ Transfer an individual who is already on another OAT (e.g., methadone, slow-release oral morphine) to buprenorphine.
- Microdosing is particularly indicated for:
 - ⇨ Individuals for whom the withdrawal symptoms associated with the standard induction method are unacceptable;⁵⁻⁹
 - ⇨ Individuals for whom withdrawal is not recommended (e.g., CAD, induction of a pregnant person);⁵
 - ⇨ Individuals whose withdrawal is not sufficient for standard induction upon arrival at a clinic or in an emergency room.^{5,10}

What support should be provided to individuals who are following a buprenorphine-naloxone microdosing induction protocol?

- When it is deemed safe to serve all the doses of buprenorphine-naloxone required, the offer can be made to use of a blister pack or dispill.
- In cases where the individual is already taking buprenorphine-naloxone on a daily basis and is prescribed a twice-daily dose, the first dose is generally administered in the pharmacy, and the second dose is given to the individual.^{3,11}
- The individual will also receive a fact sheet detailing the induction schedule, the steps to be followed to ensure that the induction goes well, and some advice, including the following:
 - ⇨ It is not necessary to observe a strict interval between doses of buprenorphine-naloxone. They can be taken a few hours before or a few hours after the scheduled time.
 - ⇨ Buprenorphine-naloxone can be taken at the same time as other opioids. It is not necessary to take these drugs at different times.
 - ⇨ Withdrawal symptoms may be experienced during the process. A [withdrawal kit](#) will also be prescribed, and can be used as needed.

- If consecutive doses are missed over a period exceeding 48 hours, the community pharmacist may reassess the individual and adjust the prescription. If necessary, the pharmacist can contact the prescriber. See: [Optimisation du rôle du pharmacien communautaire](#) (in French only).

Missed doses	Recommended action(s)
Less than 48 hours without a dose	Take the missed dose as soon as possible. Restart the induction schedule from the missed dose.
More than 48 hours without a dose	Reassess the individual. If necessary, contact the prescriber.

Inspired by: Marwah et coll.³, Patel et coll.⁴, Cho et coll.¹² et CRDQ¹³.

For a complete guide to using the buprenorphine-naloxone microdosing induction method, consult the Dépendance section at <https://dependanceitinerance.ca> (the site includes many documents in English).

Document inspired by work carried out by the Centre de réadaptation en dépendance du CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale.

REFERENCES FOR APPENDIX 3

- Hämmig R, Kemter A, Strasser J, von Bardeleben U, Gugger B, Walter M, et al. Use of microdoses for induction of buprenorphine treatment with overlapping full opioid agonist use: the Bernese method. *Subst Abuse Rehabil.* 2016;7:99-105.
- Institut national d'excellence en santé et services sociaux. Guide d'usage optimal – Traitement par agonistes opioïdes [Internet]. Montréal (Québec): Institut national d'excellence en santé et services sociaux (INESSS) ; 2021 [cited 2022 Jan. 21]. Available from: www.inesss.qc.ca/fileadmin/doc/INESSS/Rapports/Medicaments/GUO_TUO_FR.pdf
- Marwah R, Coons C, Myers J, Dumont Z. Microdosage de buprénorphine-naloxone: Outils pour l'induction du traitement par agoniste des récepteurs opioïdes. *Can Fam Physician.* Déc. 2020;66(12):e302-6.
- Patel P, Dunham K, Lee K. Buprenorphine/Naloxone Microdosing: The Bernese Method [Internet]. Canadian Mental Health Association; 2019 sept [cited 2021 Sept. 23]. Available from: www.metaphi.ca/wp-content/uploads/Guide_Microdosing.pdf
- MacHealth. Buprenorphine Reference Guide v3.0 [Internet]. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto & McMaster University; 2021 [cited 2021 Nov. 15]. Available from: machealth.ca/programs/opioids_clinical_primer/m/buprenorphine_rg_and_course_handouts/2403
- Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals. Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT) Standards [Internet]. Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals; 2020. Available from: www.saskpharm.ca/document/5871/REF_OAT_Standards.pdf
- Center for Addiction Medicine and Policy. Micro-dosing Guidelines: Buprenorphine Cross-Tapering using a Micro-dosing Strategy [Internet]. Center for addiction medicine and policy; 2021 [cited 2021 Oct. 3]. Available from: penncamp.org/clinical/micro-dosing/
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). Opioid Agonist Therapy: A Synthesis of Canadian Guidelines for Treating Opioid Use Disorder [Internet]. Centre de toxicomanie et de santé mentale; 2021 mai. Available from: www.camh.ca/-/media/files/professionals/canadian-opioid-use-disorder-guideline2021-pdf.pdf
- Adams KK, Machnicz M, Sobieraj DM. Initiating buprenorphine to treat opioid use disorder without prerequisite withdrawal: a systematic review. *Addict Sci Clin Pract.* 8 juin 2021;16(1):36.
- College of Physicians & Surgeons of Manitoba. The College of Physicians & Surgeons of Manitoba Buprenorphine/naloxone Recommended Practice Manual: Recommendations for buprenorphine/naloxone induction using the micro-dosing method. [Internet]. College of Physicians & Surgeons of Manitoba; 2020 juin. Available from: <https://cpsm.mb.ca/assets/PrescribingPracticesProgram/Buprenorphine%20Specific%20Guidance%20-%20Recommendations%20for%20Buprenorphine%20Micro-dosing%20Inductions.pdf>
- McLean M. OAT Transitions - focus on microdosing [Internet]. 2018. Available from: stophiv aids.ca/wp-content/uploads/Microdosing-McLean-BOOST-14-June-2018.pdf
- Centre de réadaptation en dépendance de Québec. Induction de buprénorphine-naloxone (Suboxone^{MC}) par microdosage. Centre de réadaptation en dépendance de Québec; 2019.
- Cho E, Lu S. Microdosing of Buprenorphine for Induction (the Bernese Method) [Internet]. BC Pharmacy Association; 2021 juil. [cited 2021 Oct. 3]. Available from: www.bcpharmacy.ca/tablet/fall-18/microdosing-buprenorphine-induction-bernese-method