

Starting Suboxone: A Patient's Guide

You can't just start or stop using Suboxone®--you have to be eased onto and off of it. The process of easing you onto Suboxone is called *induction*.

Before induction: Heroin, prescription painkillers, and methadone all belong to a family of drugs called the *opioids*. Before you start on Suboxone, your doctor will ask you to stay off all opioids for a little while --usually less than a day. The exact amount of time you'll need to stay off opioids depends on what kind of drugs you've been taking and how much you use per day.

After going for a day or two without using opioids, you will be in the early stages of withdrawal. You may feel uncomfortable for a little while, but you will feel better when you start taking Suboxone.

If you do slip up and use an opioid during this time, you run the risk of going into sudden, intense withdrawal. Tell your doctor if you used opioids, and he or she will reschedule your induction.

During induction: Over the course of a few days (usually 1-3 days), your physician will gradually increase your dose of Suboxone until he or she finds your ideal dose. During this time

- DON'T** use any opioids --you will probably go into withdrawal and be very uncomfortable!

- DO** expect to spend an extended period of time (2-4 hours each day) in the doctor's office --your doctor will need to keep you under observation while you adjust to the medication.

- DO** be prepared for a few days of craving -- you may crave opioids until the Suboxone begins to kick in, but it is very important that you do not use them!

- DO** be honest with your physician how you're feeling --your doctor needs to know about your mood, your level of craving, and your physical state to accurately determine your ideal dose of Suboxone.

After induction:

- DON'T** stop using Suboxone without talking to your doctor --you will go into withdrawal.

- DO** tell your doctor if you experience side effects due to the Suboxone or if you crave opioids --your dose may need to be adjusted if you do.

- DO** take advantage of therapy and other resources that can help you stay drug free and stable!