

# Break Free From Opioid Addiction

A discussion guide for you and your physician



**2.5**  
MILLION

Estimated number of Americans who are addicted to opioids, based on the 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.<sup>1,2</sup>

The CDC characterizes prescription pain reliever addiction as a “growing deadly epidemic” responsible for over 40 deaths a day.<sup>3</sup> According to the ONDCP it “represents an alarming public health crisis.”<sup>4</sup> Whether you are currently being treated for opioid addiction or are considering treatment for the first time, you have taken an important step toward becoming addiction-free.

In 2014, the National Alliance of Advocates for Buprenorphine Treatment (NAABT) solicited response to an online survey to assess the challenges of opioid addiction treatment; 606 people with opioid addiction responded. Survey results indicate that, although drug addiction often starts early in a person’s life, addiction can affect people of all ages and economic circumstances. You are not alone in your struggles.

**47%**

Percentage of those addicted to opioid pain relievers receiving treatment.<sup>1</sup>

**58%**

Percentage of respondents who indicated that opioid addiction began with the treatment of acute or chronic physical pain.

## WHAT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE TO TREAT OPIOID ADDICTION?

Buprenorphine, a prescription medication for the treatment of opioid addiction, is currently available and you should speak with your healthcare provider about treatment options. Only certified physicians may treat opioid addiction with buprenorphine, so do not be discouraged if you cannot find a doctor immediately. In the NAABT survey, **58%** of respondents indicated that when they found a certified physician, there was a waiting list for an appointment.

Counseling is an important component of addiction treatment. However, only **51%** of respondents reported that they currently were in counseling. A counselor can assist you with making the significant life changes necessary to reach the goal of remaining addiction-free long-term. You may also seek support from community groups and other support organizations.

For assistance in finding a physician in your area certified to treat opioid addiction with buprenorphine, or for a list of online support groups, visit the NAABT website at [www.naabt.org](http://www.naabt.org).

<sup>1</sup> Results from the 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: summary of national findings. US Department of Health and Human Services website. <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/NSDUH/2012SummNatFindDetTables/NationalFindings/NSDUHresults2012.pdf>. Accessed May 13, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Volkow ND, Frieden TR, Hyde PS, Cha SS. Medication-assisted therapies—tackling the opioid-overdose epidemic. *N Engl J Med*. 2014;370(22):2063-2066.

## I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH MY DOCTOR, WHAT SHOULD I SAY ABOUT MY OPIOID ADDICTION?

Informing your physician is the first important step. **87%** of survey respondents indicated that they initiated the discussion about treatment with their physicians. Remember to be ready and willing to share as much about yourself and your addiction as you can. You may feel uncomfortable at first, but your doctor can help provide you with the support and medication you need to treat your opioid addiction. Ask your physician about the various treatment options available.

**56%**

Percentage of respondents who indicated they took a lower dose than prescribed without consulting their physicians. Although taking medication as prescribed is part of the recovery process, patients expressed a number of reasons for taking less. Among the reasons for this was that a lower dose reduced their side effects. Speak with your physician about treatment expectations early in the process to resolve your concerns.

## ASK YOUR PHYSICIAN ABOUT THE SIDE EFFECTS OF BUPRENORPHINE SO YOU ARE INFORMED AND UNDERSTAND WHAT MAY OCCUR.

- **74%** of respondents experienced constipation during treatment
- **71%** of respondents mentioned buprenorphine’s unpleasant taste

If you are experiencing any side effects, talk with your physician. Buprenorphine comes in various forms and your physician may switch your prescription and/or discuss other remedies, such as over-the-counter medications or a change in diet to help you obtain relief.

If you are currently in treatment and are having difficulty taking the medication as prescribed, ask your physician about new or alternative medicines available. **21%** of survey respondents agreed that compared with other medications, taking buprenorphine was a nuisance. Of the 128 respondents who agreed, the most common reasons given were:

- Not being able to talk or swallow until the medication dissolves – **66%**
- Keeping the medication under the tongue until it dissolves – **63%**

Discuss your concerns with your physician. There are different forms of buprenorphine/naloxone; discuss which one may be right for you with your physician.

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Injury Prevention & Control. Policy Impact: Prescription Painkiller Overdoses. <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/rxbrief/>. July 2014 stats: <http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/opioid-prescribing/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Obama Administration releases action plan to address national prescription drug abuse epidemic; announces FDA action requiring drug makers to develop education program for prescribers about safe use of opioids [press release]. Washington, DC: White House, Office of the National Drug Control Policy; April 19, 2011. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/news-releases-remarks/obama-administration-releases-action-plan>. Accessed August 26, 2014.



The National Alliance of Advocates for Buprenorphine Treatment (NAABT) is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to educate the public about the disease of opioid addiction and the buprenorphine treatment option, help reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with patients with addiction disorders, and connect patients to healthcare providers.

For more information, as well as additional resources, please visit [www.naabt.org](http://www.naabt.org).

The medical information in this guide is provided as an information resource only, and is not to be used or relied on for any diagnostic or treatment purposes. This information is not intended to be patient education, does not create any patient-physician relationship, and should not be used as a substitute for professional diagnosis and treatment by a licensed healthcare provider.

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