

BUPRENORPHINE AND ORAL HEALTH

FDA warns about dental problems with buprenorphine medicines dissolved in the mouth to treat opioid use disorder and pain.



What is buprenorphine?

Buprenorphine is a medication used to treat opioid use disorder, acute pain, and chronic pain. It can be used under the tongue (sublingual), in the cheek (buccal), by injection (intravenous and subcutaneous), as a skin patch (transdermal), or as an implant. The buprenorphine medicines that are associated with dental problems are tablets and films dissolved under the tongue or placed against the inside of the cheek.



Are there oral health risks to buprenorphine for OUD treatment?

Buprenorphine is an effective and important treatment option for opioid use disorder (OUD) but it can lead to dental problems including tooth decay, cavities, oral infections and loss of teeth.



Should it still be a treatment option?

YES! The benefits of these medicines clearly outweigh the risks – but oral health risks CANNOT be ignored.



How can clients protect their oral health while undergoing buprenorphine OUD treatment?



Take a large sip of water, swish it gently around your teeth and gums and swallow after the tablet dissolves.



Wait at least one hour before brushing your teeth after the tablet dissolves.



Connect with an oral health provider when undergoing treatment to address any additional oral health needs to improve overall health.



What should health professionals do?



Oral Health History

Ask patients about their oral health history prior to prescribing treatment with a transmucosal buprenorphine medicine.



Refer to Dentist

These serious dental problems have been reported even in patients with no history of dental issues, so refer them to a dentist as soon as possible after starting transmucosal buprenorphine.



Counsel Patient

Counsel patients about the potential for dental problems and the importance of taking extra steps after the medicine has completely dissolved.

Sources

U.S. Food and Drug Administration. *MedWatch: The FDA Safety Information and Adverse Event Reporting Program*. January 12, 2022. <https://www.fda.gov/safety/medwatch-fda-safety-information-and-adverse-event-reporting-program>

U.S. Food and Drug Administration. *Buprenorphine: Drug Safety Communication – FDA warns about dental problems with buprenorphine medicines dissolved in the mouth to treat opioid use disorder and pain*. January 12, 2022. <https://www.fda.gov/safety/medical-product-safety-information/buprenorphine-drug-safety-communication-fda-warns-about-dental-problems-buprenorphine-medicines>

Full Guidance: <https://www.fda.gov/media/155352/download>

For more information, visit:

<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-safety-and-availability/fda-warns-about-dental-problems-buprenorphine-medicines-dissolved-mouth-treat-opioid-use-disorder>

Courtesy of [Tooka Zokaie, MPH, MAS, CPH](#) @tookatooth #OralHealthIsHealth.

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