

Use of Buprenorphine-Naloxone (Suboxone) in Pregnancy

- A growing body of evidence supports the use of combination buprenorphine/naloxone (Suboxone) in pregnancy in place of buprenorphine monotherapy (Subutex).
- Previously, it was common practice to switch pregnant women to buprenorphine monotherapy despite the lack of evidence of harm from the combination product. In some cases, this has contributed to injection abuse, diversion, or even victimization of pregnant patients, such as theft of medication or coercion to share or sell medication since their acquaintances were aware that pregnant women had access to buprenorphine monotherapy, which has a much higher street value and abuse potential than buprenorphine/naloxone.
- We have observed that the immediate postpartum period can be a difficult time for women to tolerate change, and many of our patients express intense anxiety or resistance to switching from buprenorphine to buprenorphine/naloxone postpartum. While the majority of these women ultimately transition successfully to buprenorphine/naloxone, treatment is complicated by patient requests to delay the transition due to fear of adverse effects and concerns about whether a different formulation will be equally effective.
- Based on our review of the literature as well as our clinical experience, **we recommend all pregnant women continue on buprenorphine/naloxone, rather than switch temporarily to buprenorphine monotherapy during pregnancy.**
- The D-H Moms in Recovery Program has now had a number of women continue buprenorphine/naloxone throughout pregnancy and postpartum without adverse effects, and these women seem to fare better in the postpartum period since they are not coping with yet another transition while sleep-deprived and learning to care for a newborn. Of note, we have been successful in obtaining prior authorizations from both Vermont and New Hampshire Medicaid as well as private insurers for the combination product, although in some cases this has involved providing the references below.
- Please consider reviewing the references below for additional information regarding the evidence base for this practice. We are happy to provide PDF copies of any of these papers if you are unable to access them.

References

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