

# Medication-assisted treatment (MAT)

An evidence-based approach to treating Opioid Use Disorders



## what is MAT?

Medication-assisted treatment (MAT), or Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD), is the use of FDA-approved medications to treat opioid use disorder (OUD). In combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, these medications can help people to manage symptoms and sustain recovery.

## how does MAT work?

MAT/MOUD medications engage with the same receptors in the brain that are activated by opioids. While in the system, they can block the effects of other drugs or reduce the physical symptoms of withdrawal. Use of these medications can improve treatment outcomes by reducing cravings, normalizing brain chemistry, and providing relief from physical aspects of dependence that might disrupt early stage recovery.

**MYTH:** *MAT is simply taking a medication to "cure" my addiction.*

**TRUTH:** MAT is intended to be part of a "whole-patient" approach which includes counseling and behavioral therapies, family support, and sometimes peer support services (recovery groups, peer recovery specialists) and community services (housing, education, and employment programs).

**MYTH:** *MAT just substitutes one drug addiction for another.*

**TRUTH:** MAT participants are not taking their treatment medications to get high, but rather to manage the symptoms of withdrawal and physical cravings in order to be able to mentally and emotionally participate in the recovery process.

## how can MAT help?

Studies have shown that MAT/MOUD can:

- Help patients manage withdrawal symptoms
- Suppress or reduce cravings for opioids
- Reduce the likelihood of recurring use and overdose
- Reduce likelihood of negative health outcomes due to continued use, including HIV and hepatitis transmission
- Reduce risk of incarceration related to substance use
- Improve pregnancy outcomes for individuals with OUD
- Prolong retention in addiction treatment




These effects can support the physical and emotional stability necessary for long-term success in recovery. Medications for OUD treatment should be paired with appropriate therapies and support services as recommended by a treatment provider. Individual outcomes may vary based on medication and treatment program.

# medications used in MAT

There are three drugs approved by the FDA for the treatment of opioid dependence: **buprenorphine**, **methadone**, and **naltrexone**.

A common buprenorphine product is **Suboxone**, which is a combination of buprenorphine and naloxone

*Prior to starting any medication or treatment plan always consult a medical doctor or other qualified healthcare provider regarding questions that you may have about any past, present, or suspected medical conditions and how those medical conditions may be impacted by starting any medication or treatment plan.*

| Medication  | How it's taken                                      | How often it's taken  | How it works   | Who can prescribe it                                   |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Methadone</b><br>   | liquid, edible wafer or tablet                      | daily   | <i>opioid agonist</i><br>reduces opioid craving and withdrawal and blunts or blocks the effects of opioids   | any prescriber at a certified opioid treatment program |
| <b>Buprenorphine</b><br>(Suboxone, Probuphine, Subutex, Sublocade)<br> | tablet, oral dissolving strip, implant or injection | <b>Tablet or strip:</b><br>daily<br><b>Implant:</b><br>every 6 months<br><b>Injection:</b><br>monthly | <i>opioid partial agonist</i><br>reduces opioid craving and withdrawal and blunts or blocks the effects of opioids; activates opioid receptors less than full agonists | any prescriber with a DEA X-waiver                     |
| <b>Naltrexone</b><br>(Vivitrol, ReVia)<br>                             | tablet or injection                                 | <b>Tablet:</b><br>every 1-3 days<br><b>Injection:</b><br>monthly                                      | <i>opioid antagonist</i><br>blocks the euphoric and sedative effects of opioids and prevents feelings of euphoria  | any prescriber (check for clinic availability)         |

Sources: Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT), SAMHSA, 4 Jan. 2021, [www.samhsa.gov/medication-assisted-treatment](http://www.samhsa.gov/medication-assisted-treatment); Information about Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT), U.S. FDA, 14 Feb. 2019, [www.fda.gov/drugs/information-drug-class/information-about-medication-assisted-treatment-mat](http://www.fda.gov/drugs/information-drug-class/information-about-medication-assisted-treatment-mat).

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Providing HOPE for those with Chronic Pain and Addiction

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