

# Buprenorphine/Naloxone Initiation in Emergency Departments in Alberta

## What is opioid use disorder?

Opioid use disorder (OUD) is the repeated use of opioids and being unable to stop using them without help. They can be prescribed or illicit (street) drugs. Having OUD can be a chronic and life-threatening condition.

## How can OUD be treated?

For many individuals who live with OUD, there are prescription medications that can help, such as buprenorphine/naloxone ('bup-nal', trade name: Suboxone®). When taken properly, this medication reduces cravings and withdrawal symptoms. It helps people feel normal and use opioids less often and in smaller amounts. Once on a stable dose, some people can stop taking opioids altogether.

## What is the Bup/Nal Initiation in ED project?

Many individuals who live with OUD visit emergency departments (ED) because of an overdose, withdrawal symptoms, or other issues related to opioid use. **The Emergency Strategic Clinical Network™** is implementing a province-wide strategy to screen and initiate bup-nal for eligible ED patients. The treatment program involves 3 steps:

1. **Screen** – appropriately screen patients for opioid use disorder in ED
2. **Initiate** – initiate bup-nal for eligible patients in ED
3. **Follow-up** – provide rapid follow-up at a community clinic for future dosing & care

## What are the expected outcomes?

- Enhanced access to evidence-based care
- Improved patient experience and quality of life
- Better coordination of care
- Decreased morbidity and mortality

## What work is under way?

The roll-out of the program began in May 2018, with several sites now live across the province. Work is ongoing with the goal of implementing the program at all EDs in Alberta.

## How to get in touch with us?

For more information visit our [www.ahs.ca/escn](http://www.ahs.ca/escn) and watch for our tweets through our Twitter account (@EMERGENCY\_SCN).

