

How to Use Sublocade and Brixadi

Sublocade and Brixadi are long-acting forms of injectable buprenorphine given once every four or eight weeks for Sublocade and weekly or monthly for Brixadi. The ease of use and flexible dosing of these extended-release formulations make them real game-changers, particularly for patients with adherence challenges. Both products are expensive, though Medicare and many Medicaid programs cover the cost. See “Buprenorphine Extended-Release Injection Monotherapy” fact sheet for additional information.

Sublocade comes as a prefilled syringe in two doses: 100 mg/0.5 mL and 300 mg/1.5 mL. It is given as a subcutaneous intra-abdominal injection. The needle is short but rather thick, so it can hurt going in, though the pain subsides after a few seconds. It forms a small deposit, a little smaller than a grape, that slowly releases medication for up to 18 months.

Patients should be stabilized on sublingual or buccal buprenorphine for at least five days prior to receiving their first injection. The Sublocade dosage depends on how much buprenorphine it took to stabilize symptoms:

| SL/Buccal Dose | Sublocade Dose | | |
|----------------|----------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | First dose | Second dose (four weeks later) | Maintenance dose |
| 8–18 mg daily | 300 mg | 100 mg* | 100 mg Q4wks or 300 mg Q8wks |
| 20–24 mg daily | 300 mg | 300 mg | 100 mg Q4wks |

*If patient is still experiencing craving or withdrawal after initial dose, consider 300 mg as second dose

- Some patients have breakthrough cravings on the 100 mg dose. For these patients, you can give 300 mg every month indefinitely. Anecdotally, this situation is common.
- You can forgo the five-day trial period for patients who have previously tolerated buprenorphine and have an established dose.
- Serum levels peak about 24 hours after injection. Some patients will require one or two doses of sublingual or buccal buprenorphine before the Sublocade takes full effect.
- Shortest duration between doses is 26 days.

Brixadi comes in a range of doses in prefilled syringes (see fact sheet). It is given as a subcutaneous injection into the buttocks, thigh, abdomen, or upper arms (avoid upper arms for first four doses).

Unlike Sublocade, Brixadi can be initiated in patients not already receiving sublingual or buccal buprenorphine, but a 4 mg SL dose is recommended to help determine dosing.

| SL/Buccal Dose | Brixadi Weekly Dose | Brixadi Monthly Dose |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| ≤6 mg daily | 8 mg | N/A |
| 8–10 mg daily | 16 mg | 64 mg |
| 12–16 mg daily | 24 mg | 96 mg |
| 18–24 mg daily | 32 mg | 128 mg |

When transitioning from Brixadi weekly to Brixadi monthly dosing (or vice versa), use the following dosing guide:

- 16 mg weekly: use 64 mg monthly
- 24 mg weekly: use 96 mg monthly
- 32 mg weekly: use 128 mg monthly

Who is eligible:

- Patients with poor adherence to sublingual/buccal buprenorphine
- Patients who travel and may be stuck out of town without medication
- Patients who prefer to minimize pill burden
- Patients in unstable social situations, like being unhoused or leaving incarceration

Tips for administration:

- Needle enters at a 45-degree angle for Sublocade, 90-degree angle for Brixadi
- Give the medication over a minute or so; very fast injections hurt more
- Do not rub the injection area after the injection
- Avoid injecting at the belt line or where a seatbelt will cross