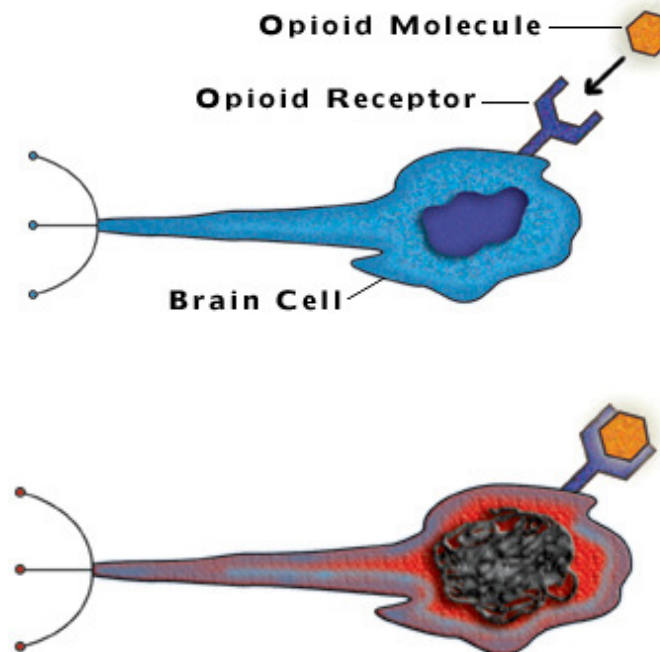


## How Opioids and Buprenorphine Work

Heroin...methadone...Oxycontin...What do these three drugs have in common? Like many other drugs -- both legal and illegal -- they are all a type of drug called **opioids**.

### How opioids work

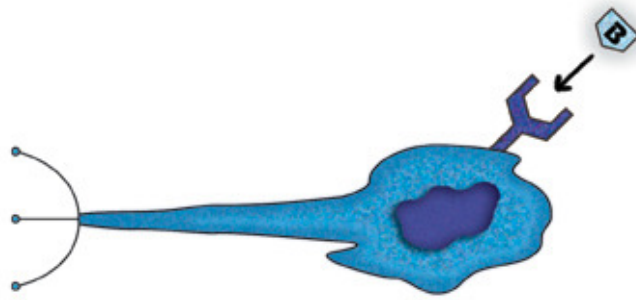
1. The opioid enters your bloodstream and is carried to your brain.
2. Brain cells that have an opioid attached to them behave differently than brains cells that do not. All of the feelings associated with taking an opioid -- feeling high, lightheaded, or sleepy, for example -- are a result of your brain cells' changed behavior.



### How buprenorphine works

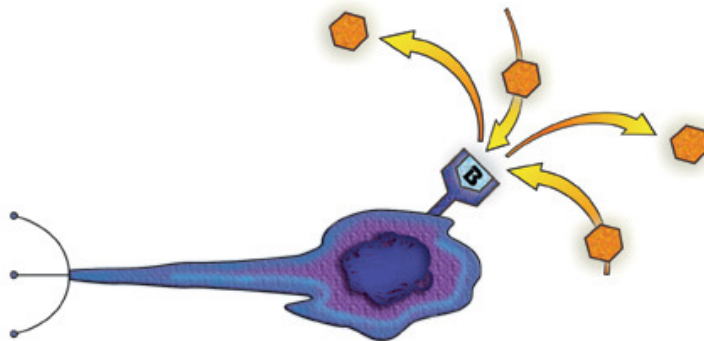
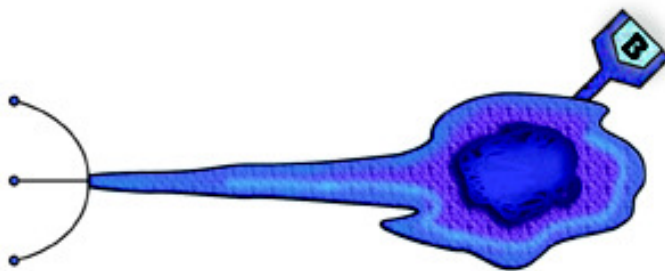
Buprenorphine is a kind of opioid, but it works a little bit differently -- and in a way which makes it very useful for treating opioid dependence.

1. Like other opioids, buprenorphine enters the bloodstream and is carried to the brain.



2. While buprenorphine does change the way your brain cells work, it does not change them as much as many other opioids. So, buprenorphine controls craving for opioids but without causing a powerful high. Also, it is also nearly impossible to overdose on buprenorphine.

3. Buprenorphine attaches to opioid receptors much more tightly than other opioids. If you take buprenorphine and then another opioid, you will not feel much of an effect from the other opioid. This is because the buprenorphine stays on the opioid receptor and the other opioid cannot bind to it.



If you take another opioid and then take buprenorphine, the buprenorphine can knock the other opioid off the receptor and take its place. If this happens, you can go into withdrawal.

To avoid going into precipitated withdrawal, your physician will instruct you not to take opioids for several hours before beginning on buprenorphine. Also, you should not take other opioids while you are on buprenorphine maintenance.

