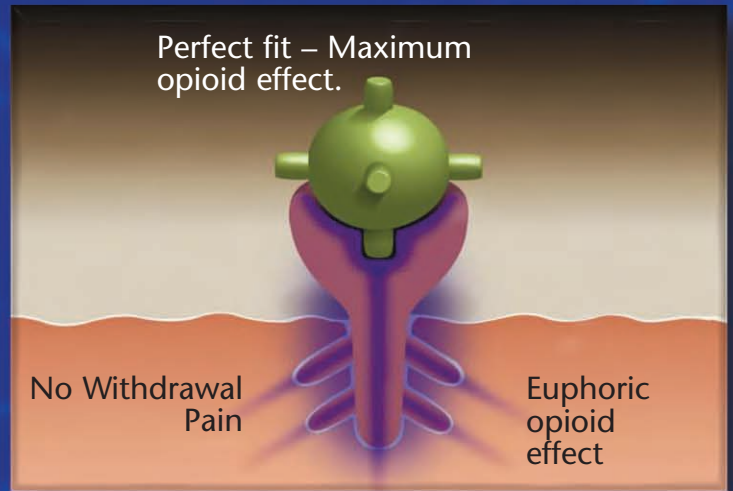
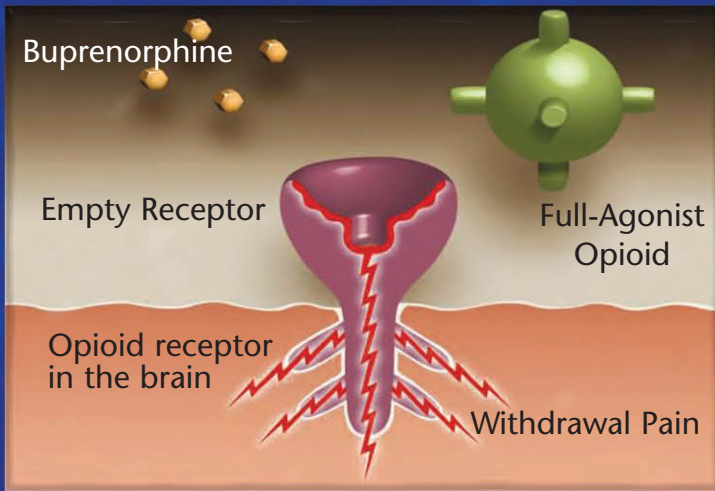
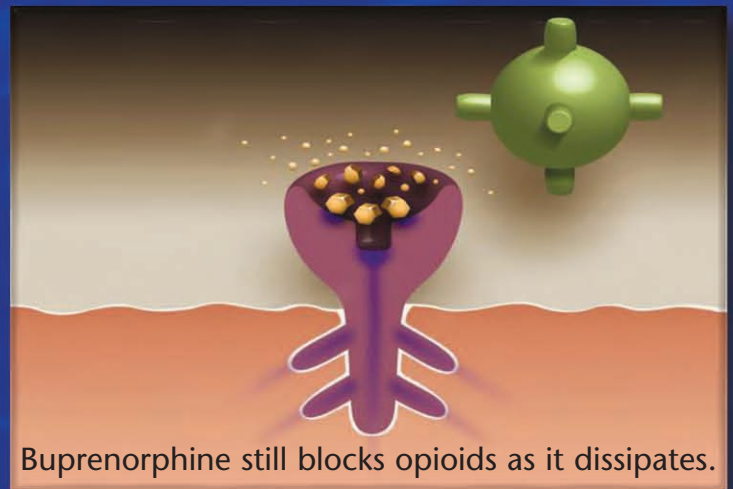
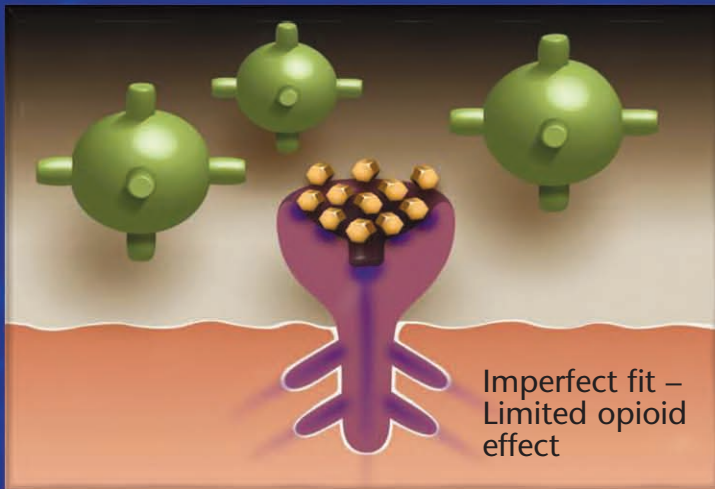


# How Buprenorphine Works



**Opioid receptor is empty.** As someone becomes *tolerant* to opioids, they become less sensitive and require more opioids to produce the same effect. Whenever there is an insufficient amount of opioid receptors activated, the patient feels discomfort. This happens in withdrawal.

**Opioid receptor filled with a full-agonist.** The strong opioid effect of heroin and painkillers can cause euphoria and stop the withdrawal for a period of time (4-24 hours). The brain begins to crave opioids, sometimes to the point of an uncontrollable compulsion (addiction), and the cycle repeats and escalates.



**Opioids replaced and blocked by buprenorphine.** Buprenorphine competes with the full agonist opioids for the receptor. Since buprenorphine has a higher affinity (stronger binding ability) it expels existing opioids and blocks others from attaching. As a partial agonist, the buprenorphine has a limited opioid effect, enough to stop withdrawal but not enough to cause intense euphoria.

**Over time (24-72 hours) buprenorphine dissipates,** but still creates a limited opioid effect (enough to prevent withdrawal) and continues to block other opioids from attaching to the opioid receptors.

*The above illustrations are for educational purposes and do not accurately represent the true appearance.*



The National Alliance of Advocates  
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10M 6/07  
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