

Common Myths About Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) For Opioid Use Disorder Explained

Myth #1: MAT just substitutes one addiction for another

MAT uses longer-acting and safer medicines to block withdrawal symptoms and reduce cravings for more dangerous opioids. People stable on MAT report feeling “normal” and are able to lead healthy, productive lives. MAT should be thought of as a medicine for a chronic condition, just like a person with diabetes needing to take insulin.

Myth #2: MAT should only be taken for a short period of time

There is no evidence to suggest that stopping MAT at any time is beneficial. It may actually be harmful for people to come off treatment. People who use MAT stay in treatment longer, are at lower risk for overdose, and are generally healthier.

Myth #3: MAT increases the risk of overdose

Medicines used in MAT are actually *safer* than other opioids. Studies have shown people are at *lower* risk of dying from an overdose while on MAT.

Myth #4: People frequently abuse MAT

Often, people use non-prescribed MAT to help them manage withdrawal symptoms from opioids such as heroin. Buprenorphine (“bupe”), a medicine commonly used for MAT, causes less euphoria than opioids such as heroin.

Myth #5: Most insurance companies don’t cover MAT

This is not true anymore. Most Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance plans cover MAT. However, some doses and formulations of MAT may require prior authorizations.

Language to Avoid ☹️	Alternative Language to Use 😊
Addict	Person with a substance Use Disorder
Alcoholic	Person with a Alcohol Use Disorder
Junkie, crack head, dope fiend	Person with a substance Use Disorder
Clean	Abstinent from illicit drug use
Dirty	Using illicit substances
Clean Urine Drug Screen	Testing negative for illicit drugs
Dirty Urine Drug Screen	Testing positive for illicit drugs
Compliant	Adherent

References:

1. Sordo, et al. *BMJ*. 2017 Apr 26;357:j1550.
2. Liebschutz JM, et al. *JAMA Intern Med*. 2014;174:1369-76.
3. D'Onofrio G, et al. *JAMA*;313:1636-44.