

Prescription Opioids for Chronic (Long-Term) Pain

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2018 Opioid Prescribing Requirements

Between the years 1999 to 2016, over 200,000 people in the United States died from a prescription opioid related overdose (CDC, 2017). A Washington State law passed in 2017 requiring opioid prescribing rules be written in response to the statewide opioid crisis.

The new opioid prescribing requirements relate to the treatment of all types of pain and are designed to keep all patients safe. Much of the requirements relating to chronic pain have been in effect since 2011.

What you need to know as a patient

- Health care providers are required to consult with a pain expert if they are prescribing high doses of opioids.
- Health care providers are required to periodically review a chronic pain patient's risk category and reevaluate the treatment plan when a patient's response or compliance is unsatisfactory.
- Individual health care providers, practices, systems, pharmacies, and insurance companies may have more strict policies regarding opioids.



Important

- **Ask your health care provider questions about alternative treatment options for pain.**
- **Know your prescription, always follow instructions, and never take more than prescribed.**
- **Keep yourself and other safe by limiting usage, disposing of all unused opioid medications, and knowing how to recognize the signs of opioid use disorder.**

Common types of opioids are oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, tramadol, fentanyl, morphine, and methadone. Opioid medications may be prescribed by health care providers to treat moderate to severe pain, but can have side effects and serious health risks, such as tolerance, physical dependence, opioid use disorder, and overdose.

It is important to follow medication instructions when taking opioids and always be honest with your health care provider regarding other medications you may be taking. You should avoid consuming alcohol or operating heavy machinery when taking opioid medications.

Be informed. Be aware. Never share.



What are the risks?

- Opioid use disorder
- Physical dependence
- Falls and accidents
- Increased sensitivity to pain
- Overdose

Risks may be greater with:

- **Pregnancy**
- **History of substance use**
- **Over the age of 65**
- **Mental health conditions**
- **Combining with other medications**



Possible side effects

- Nausea, vomiting, and dry mouth
- Constipation
- Sleepiness and dizziness
- Confusion
- Withdrawal



Safe storage

- Never share or sell your prescription opioids
- Keep opioid medications locked or in a safe location
- Keep out of reach of children and out of sight from others
- Leave in the original bottle with the label attached



Proper disposal

You are not required to use all of your opioid medication. To find your nearest take-back location for proper disposal of unused medications, please visit:

- takebackyourmeds.org
- med-project.org
- doh.wa.gov/safemedreturn