

Opioid Prescribing and Overdose Prevention Toolkit for Health Care Organizations

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Overview

Superior Health Quality Alliance is dedicated to helping community prescribers reduce opioid overdoses and deaths. In their updated [Clinical Practice Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Pain](#), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states, “Opioids can be essential medications for the management of pain; however, they carry considerable potential risk.” In the last couple of decades, overdose reports have sparked concern about the safety of these drugs, and overdoses have been on the rise. The CDC reports that in 2021, a record number of Americans – more than 107,000 – died from drug overdoses.¹

The CDC’s updated [2022 Clinical Practice Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Pain](#) is grouped into the four areas of consideration listed below. This toolkit contains resource materials and recommendations supporting these considerations and their 12 recommended prescribing best practices.

Opioid Prescribing Considerations

Determine Whether or Not to Initiate Opioids for Pain (*CDC Recommendations 1 and 2*)

Recommendations	Resource Materials
Determine the possible use of non-opioid therapies that are potentially as effective as opioids for acute pain and chronic pain. Evaluate the patient’s symptoms, confirm the diagnosis and work with patients to establish specific and measurable treatment goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative Treatments Fact Sheet. (CDC) • 2019 ALTO Pathways with Appendices (Wisconsin Chapter American College of Emergency Physicians)

Select and Determine Opioid Dosages (*CDC Recommendations 3, 4 and 5*)

Recommendations	Resource Materials
When initiating opioid therapy , prescribe immediate-release opioids instead of extended-release and long-acting opioids - starting with the lowest effective dosage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating Opioid Therapy (CDC)
Weigh the benefits and risks. Exercise care when changing opioid dosage while optimizing non-opioid therapies. Tapering slowly if or when needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonopioid Therapies (CDC) • Pocket Guide: Tapering Opioids for Chronic Pain (CDC)

¹ [Products - Vital Statistics Rapid Release - Provisional Drug Overdose Data \(cdc.gov\)](#)

Decide Duration of Prescriptions and Follow-up (*CDC Recommendations 6 and 7*)

Recommendations	Resource Materials
Prescribe no greater quantity than needed for the expected duration of acute pain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calculate Total Daily Dose of Opioids for Safer Dosage (CDC)
Reevaluate benefits and risks with patients within 1–4 weeks of starting opioid therapy and regularly throughout the course of care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing Opioid Therapy (CDC)

Assess Risk and Potential Harms of Use (*CDC Recommendations 8 through 12*)

Recommendations	Resource Materials
Before starting and periodically during opioid therapy continuation , evaluate risk for opioid-related harms and discuss with patients, incorporating strategies to mitigate risk, including offering naloxone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opioid Use Disorder: Preventing and Treating (CDC) • Risks and How to Reduce Them (CDC) • Naloxone Opioids (CDC) • Fact Sheets Naloxone (CDC)
Review the patient’s history of controlled substance prescriptions using state prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs) Healthcare Professionals (CDC)
Consider toxicology testing to assess for prescribed and non-prescription controlled substances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polysubstance Use Facts (CDC) • The Facts About Fentanyl (CDC)
Use caution when prescribing opioid pain medication and benzodiazepines concurrently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescription Opioid and Benzodiazepine Medications and Occupational Safety and Health: Information for Employers and Healthcare Providers (CDC) • Trends in Nonfatal and Fatal Overdoses Involving Benzodiazepines — 38 States and the District of Columbia, 2019–2020 (CDC)
Offer or arrange treatment with evidence-based medications to treat patients with opioid use disorder. Here are a couple of evidence-based guidelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addiction Medicine Toolkit Opioids (CDC) • Addiction Medicine Checklist (CDC) • Linking People with Opioid Use Disorder to Medication Treatment Feature Topics Drug Overdose (CDC)

In addition to the resources above that support the CDC’s guidelines for prescribing opioids, the resources listed below provide additional opioid overdose prevention and patient education information.

Additional Resources

Description	Links
Pain: Assessment, Non-Opioid Treatment Approaches and Opioid Management Care for Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain-Interactive-7th-V2-Ed-8.17 (ICSI)
CDC Landing Page for Opioid Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opioids (CDC)

Additional Resources

Description	Links
CDC Strategies for Preventing Overdose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence-Based Strategies for Preventing Opioid Overdose: What's Working in the United States Drug Overdose (CDC)
U.S. Food and Drug Administration Overdose Prevention Framework Flyer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overdose Prevention Framework Flyer (FDA)
SAMHSA Information on the Removal of the X-Waiver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of DATA Waiver (X-Waiver) Requirement (SAMHSA) • Recommendations for Curricular Elements in Substance Use Disorders Training (SAMHSA)
Collaborative for Relevant Education (CO*RE) Substance Use Tools Repository	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools Repository (CO*RE)
VA 2022 Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Opioids in the Management of Chronic Pain (2022) - VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines
How to Get Narcan in Your State: State Naloxone Laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to Get Narcan in Your State: State Naloxone Laws (rehabs.org)
A Pocket Guide: 2019 American Geriatrics Society Beers Criteria for Potentially Inappropriate Medication Use in Older Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2019 BEERS Pocket-Printable (AGS)
Screening Tools for Opioid Use Disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screener and Opioid Assessment for Patients with Pain- Revised (SOAPP-R) (Pain EDU.org) • Opioid Risk Tool (NIH) • Tobacco, Alcohol, Prescription medications, and other Substance (TAPS) Tool Parts I and II (NIH)

Below are some reliable resources to share with patients. Use the links to identify information appropriate for your patient's needs.

Patient Education

Description	Links
Information about Treatment Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safely and Effectively Managing Pain Without Opioids (CDC) • Acute Pain FAQ - Downloadable • Conversation Starters If You Are Prescribed Opioids (CDC)
Safe Opioid Storage and Disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WTC Health Program Pharmacy Benefits Factsheet (CDC) • Safe Medication Disposal (Walgreens)
Pain Management in Emergency/Acute Care Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain Management Statewide Handout.docx (Wisconsin Chapter American College of Emergency Physicians)
Naloxone Availability and Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FDA Approves First Over-the-Counter Naloxone Nasal Spray (Available in 2023) • Reversing Opioid Overdoses with Lifesaving Naloxone (CDC)

Patient Education	
Description	Links
Naloxone Availability and Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dose of Reality: How to Safely Administer NARCAN (Wisconsin Department of Health Services)
Fentanyl Test Strips Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dose of Reality: Get the Facts on Opioids (Wisconsin Department of Health Services) • Where to get fentanyl test strips in Minnesota (startribune.com) • HARM:LESS (Families Against Narcotics) • The Facts About Fentanyl (CDC)
Fact Sheets and Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop Overdose (CDC) • Polysubstance Use Facts (CDC) • Understanding the risks of mixing drugs (:30 - YouTube) (CDC)
For Patients Under Acute, Perinatal, or Chronic Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient Education Pain Management (Intermountain Healthcare) • Patient Education (Spanish) Pain Management

[Contact Superior Health](#) if you have questions or would like more information about this toolkit.