

Partnership HealthPlan of California

Managing Pain Safely – Provider Education Letter

What We Are Doing

As a part of our Managing Pain Safely initiative, PHC has developed safe prescribing guidelines, implemented formulary changes, and developed educational resources related to safe prescribing. Following are highlights from the Managing Pain Safely initiative.

Prior Authorization Requirement Highlights

- A restricted quantity limit has been placed on all PHC formulary opioids for single-dose strength, not to exceed a maximum daily dose of 120 Morphine Equivalent per Day (MED).
- Methadone 5mg tablets have a quantity limit of #3 tablets/day.
- Methadone 10 mg tablets: non-formulary for new starts. Patients on stable Methadone dosing less than 30 mg/day (120 MED) will be allowed to continue with documented timely fill history, as long as claims were paid by PHC. Prior authorization will be needed when the dose exceeds 30 mg/day (120 MED), when fill history was not paid by PHC and for new starts.
- Schedule II, III, IV prescription fills are limited to a 30-day supply.
- Patients who are not taking opioids chronically will be limited to 30 tablets of short-acting opioids in a 90-day timeframe for an episode of acute pain, without a prior authorization. If more than 30 tablets are prescribed or refills are requested, the pharmacy will need to submit a Treatment Authorization Request (TAR).

Note: This limit does not apply to patients already taking chronic, stable doses of short acting opioids.

Tips for Safe Opioid Prescribing

- Most experts world-wide advocate a maximum dose of 90 MED, to decrease the risk of overdose and opioid-induced hyperalgesia. PHC recommends this 90 MED limit be used as a community standard.
- Most experts agree that a daily dose of greater than 40 MED is dangerous.
- Regularly check the CURES database for all patients being prescribed opioids, preferably each time a prescription is being authorized.
- No prior authorization is required for naloxone through fee-for-service Medi-Cal. It is advised to prescribe Naloxone in conjunction with high dose opioids and/or when opioids are prescribed in conjunction with Benzodiazepines. As this is a carve-out, please bill fee-for-service Medi-Cal for all Naloxone products.
- Limit each opioid prescription to 28 days, and indicate time limit on the prescription (e.g., must last 28 days). Ensure refill is scheduled for a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday every 4 weeks.
- Have at least three office visits yearly for chronic pain patients using opioids.

You can find more information and resources on the Managing Pain Safely webpage on the PHC website. You can find this page under the Providers → Health Services tab.