



2019 Changes to Medicare Opioid Medication Coverage

Frequently Asked Questions

The Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) is making changes to the coverage of opioids. CMS has identified that prescriptions for acute event treatments are often excessive and can lead to misuse. To combat this risk, CMS is requiring all Medicare Advantage health plans to implement certain limits on new prescriptions for opioids. These changes will take effect January 1, 2019.

What does this mean?

CMS and PacificSource Medicare are teaming up to offer ways to reduce wasted opioids, decrease your patients' costs, and address the risk of opioid misuse.

Who will this impact?

Opioid-naïve Medicare patients will be limited to an initial seven-day supply of opioids. This change does not apply to commercial PacificSource members.

What if your patient needs more than a seven-day supply of opioids?

- If you know ahead of time that your patient will need longer than an initial seven-day prescription, send us an exception request. To do so, please submit any pertinent documentation via the InTouch portal at **www.Medicare.PacificSource.com** or call (888) 863-3637 if you need assistance.
- If your patient needs more than seven days of opioids, you can write a follow-up script to be filled. Plan benefits will apply. Your patient will no longer be considered opioid-naïve on the second fill.

What are safety alerts at the pharmacy from Medicare Health plans?

When electronic claims for certain high-risk medication (e.g., first prescription fills for opioids,

high doses of opioids) are submitted for payment, PacificSource will send safety-check alerts to the pharmacy. Some of these safety alerts will require the pharmacist to contact the prescriber before the prescription claim can pay. If the prescription cannot be filled as written, the prescriber or patient may request a Prior Authorization.

What do I need to do?

- Prior to issuing an initial prescription for an opioid, please discuss the risks of opioids with your patient. Discuss with your patient that taking more opioids than prescribed or mixing sedatives, benzodiazepines, gabapentinoids, or alcohol with opioids can cause serious harm.
- If your patient has a scheduled procedure or surgery after January 1, 2019, please discuss these changes with your patient.
- Inform your care teams that your patients may require additional prescriptions if they are still in pain after seven days.
- Encourage your patients to only fill a seven-day supply to prevent risks of future dependence.
- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends checking the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) before prescribing an opioid and checking the PDMP at least every three months of prescribing chronic opioids. Use the patient information obtained from your state's PDMP as an opportunity to provide potentially life-saving interventions.

You can call us at (800) 863-3637 (TTY: 711), and we'll be happy to answer questions.

We are open:

- Oct. 1 to March 31: 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. local time zone, seven days a week
- April 1 to Sept. 30: 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. local time zone, Monday - Friday