BayCarePlus
Medicare Advantage

Opioid Safety- know the risks and manage your pain safely

Prescription pain medicines (known as opioids) such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, or morphine, are used short-term to help relieve mild to moderate pain following a surgery or an acute injury. Opioids can cause serious side effects, including risk of addiction and overdose, if not taken appropriately. It is very important that your doctor monitors your opioid use closely, to ensure that you are taking the medicine appropriately as prescribed.

Knowing the RISKS FACTORS AND SIGNS of opioid overdose can help save a life.

Risk Factors for Opioid Overdose	Signs and Symptoms of Opioid Overdose
➢ Having history of drug misuse or overdose ➢ Diagnosis of depression or anxiety ➢ Diagnosis of sleep apnea (sleeping disorder with breathing difficulty) ➢ Kidney or liver disease ➢ Taking more opioids than prescribed ➢ Taking opioids with other medicines that increase the risk of side-effects or overdose with opioids, such as benzodiazepine medicines used for anxiety or sleep (i.e., alprazolam), muscle relaxants, sleep aid medicines such as zolpidem, gabapentin and Lyrica in doses greater than 2,400 mg per day. Talk to your doctor if you are taking one of these medicines.	➢ Slow or shallow breathing ➢ Confusion ➢ Slurred speech ➢ Falling asleep or loss of consciousness ➢ Constricted pupils- unusually small appearing pupils

Here are some tips to help you use these medicines in a safe manner.

- It is best to have only one doctor prescribe opioid pain medicines for you, and to use only one pharmacy. This helps make sure the right type and amount of medicine is prescribed for you, and that unsafe amounts or combinations can be detected by the pharmacy.
- Take your pain medicines as prescribed. Do not take extra doses without direction from your healthcare provider. This could be dangerous or cause you to run out of medicine before it can be refilled. Tell all your doctors what pain medicines you are taking and who is prescribing them.
- Don't take opioid medicines from someone else or share yours with others. Each person's body becomes used to their prescribed medicine and dose and taking a different type or amount could be dangerous.
- Keep your opioid medicine in a safe and secure place, out of reach of family, children, and visitors. Keep them in the original container.
- Discuss with your doctor non-prescription opioid options available to help manage your pain: physical therapy, routine exercise, non-opioid pain relievers like ibuprofen (Advil), naproxen (Aleve) or topical pain creams (i.e., Aspercreme, Capzasin, Biofreeze, including formulations with lidocaine for additional pain relief).

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BayCarePlus Plans already promotes the safe use of opioid medicines using the following safety features:

- Limiting the amount of each opioid that you can get at one time (formulary quantity limits). The Formulary (List of Covered Drugs) will show you which opioids have quantity limits and how many of each you can get at one time.

- Limiting the amount of all opioids that you can get at one time. The **BayCare**Plus systemwill calculate the amount of all opioids you are currently filling. If the combined amounts go above a certain threshold and/or you have opioid prescriptions from multiple health care providers, the prescription cannot be filled at the pharmacy. If you are in hospice care or are filling a prescription for cancer medicine, your opioid prescriptions will not be affected.

- Limiting new opioid prescriptions fills for short-term pain treatment to a 7-day supply for people who have not taken opioids in recent past. To help prevent unnecessary overtreatment with opioids for acute pain, the **BayCare**Plus system will monitor new, first-time opioid prescriptions to ensure that the prescribed quantity does not exceed 7 days.

- Avoiding overlapping fills for opioids and benzodiazepine medications (which, can increase the risk of opioid side effects and overdose). The **BayCare**Plus system will alert the pharmacist if you are trying to fill a prescription that will cause an overlap in day supply of the two medications.

These steps will help you avoid taking unsafe amounts if multiple health care providers have prescribed opioids for you without communicating with each other, or if you are filling opioid prescriptions at more than one pharmacy.