



Safe Use of Opioid Pain Medicines

New Essence Safety Feature

Pain medicines can be an important part of care, but opioid pain medicines, such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, or morphine, require close monitoring by a healthcare provider to ensure that they are being used safely. 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.
- Tell all of your doctors what pain medicines you are taking and who is prescribing them.
- 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.
- 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.

Essence Healthcare (HMO) already promotes the safe use of opioid medicines by limiting the amount of each opioid that you can get at one time (formulary quantity limits). The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is requiring Medicare health plans to add a new safety feature to their pharmacy systems, to further help prevent health plan members from receiving potentially unsafe amounts of opioids. Starting January 1, 2017, when you attempt to fill or refill a prescription for an opioid, the Essence system will calculate the amount of all opioids you are currently filling. If the combined amounts go above a certain threshold and you have opioid prescriptions from two or more healthcare providers, the prescription cannot be filled at the pharmacy. This will help you avoid taking unsafe amounts if multiple healthcare

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providers have prescribed opioids for you without communicating with each other, or if you are filling opioid prescriptions at more than one pharmacy.

Please rest assured that if you have only one healthcare provider prescribing opioids, and you are filling typical amounts of opioid medicines, your prescriptions will not be affected. Also, if you are in hospice care or are filling a prescription for cancer medicine, your opioid prescriptions will not be affected. If your doctor feels that you need higher amounts of opioid medicines than what the system will allow, he or she can ask us to cover more by submitting a coverage determination request.

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