

Opioid Initiatives, Effective August 1, 2019

Frequently Asked Questions



1. Why is this happening?
2. What is the difference between opioid naïve vs chronic opioid patients?
3. Is DOM imposing an opioid prescribing limit?
4. What is Morphine Equivalent Daily Dose (MEDD) and how is it calculated?
5. Who is exempt from these edits?
6. When should naloxone be co-prescribed?
7. Are the opioid partial agonists (buprenorphine), used for the treatment of opioid dependence or addiction impacted by this change?
8. Did DOM notify me?

1. Please refer to the DOM Provider Notice found at this link <https://medicaid.ms.gov/medicaid-to-implement-new-opioid-initiative-effective-aug-1/>
2. Patients who *have not* routinely filled an opioid prescription (e.g., 1 claim per month for the past 3 consecutive months) will be considered as new to opioids or **opioid naïve**. Patients *who have* routinely filled any opioid prescriptions (e.g. 1 claim per month for the past 3 consecutive months) will be considered **chronic opioid** users.
The claims system will allow opioid- naïve patients to fill 2 x 7 day supplies in a rolling 30 days for a total of three months without prior authorization. After three months of filling these prescriptions the patient would then be considered to have chronic pain.
3. This is not a prescribing limit. Decisions to taper or discontinue prescription opioids are individualized between the patient and the prescriber.
4. MEDD, also known as MME or Morphine Milligram Equivalent, is a value assigned to opioids to represent their relative potencies. MEDD is determined by using an equivalency factor to calculate a dose of morphine that is equivalent to the ordered opioid.

Calculating the total daily dose of opioids:

<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/prescribing/guideline.html>

Morphine Equivalent Daily Dose (MEDD) Calculator examples:

<https://www.oregonpainguidance.org/opioidmedcalculator/>

<https://www.easycalculation.com/medical/opioid-conversion-calculator.php>

<http://www.agencymeddirectors.wa.gov/Calculator/DoseCalculator.htm>

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5. Patients with a diagnosis of cancer or sickle cell disease are exempt from all opioid initiatives except for opioid /benzodiazepine combination use.
All other beneficiaries, including those residing in long term care facilities are *not* exempt from any of these initiatives.
6. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has issued extensive guidance at <https://www.hhs.gov/opioids/sites/default/files/2018-12/naloxone-coprescribing-guidance.pdf>
Through a standing order issued by the Mississippi State Department of Health, pharmacists are now permitted to dispense by request the narcotic blocker naloxone. A prescription from a doctor or other medical practitioner is not required. **To view or download the current Naloxone Statewide Standing Order:**
[https://www.mbp.ms.gov/Documents/Naloxone Statewide Standing Order 5 31 2019.pdf](https://www.mbp.ms.gov/Documents/Naloxone%20Statewide%20Standing%20Order%205%2031%202019.pdf)
7. No. DOM does not consider buprenorphine products, used for the treatment of opioid dependence or addiction, to be an opioid analgesic.
8. DOM, through the MS-DUR, has been routinely sending out provider notification letters over the past several years alerting providers whose patients are prescribed opioids with MEDDs ≥ 90 or for whose patients are currently prescribed concomitant opioids/benzodiazepines.

DOM has provided content regarding the opioid initiatives on two Medicaid Provider Bulletins:

- December 2016, Volume 22, Issue 4 - <https://www.ms-medicaid.com/msenvision/servlet/DocumentViewerServlet?docType=ProviderBulletins&fileName=201612.pdf>
- March 2019, Volume 25, Issue 1 - <https://www.ms-medicaid.com/msenvision/servlet/DocumentViewerServlet?docType=ProviderBulletins&fileName=201903.pdf>

Other communications from DOM include:

- In June of 2019 letters were mailed to prescribers across the state of Mississippi explaining these changes
- On July 22, 2019, DOM's Communications Officer, emailed notice to DOM's listserv. This listserv includes, but is not limited to, Mississippi's state dental, medical, nursing and pharmacy professional associations. Most of these professional organizations then disseminate DOM notices to their membership.
- On July 22, 2019 DOM posted on its website in the News and Notices section regarding these opioid initiatives.
- On July 25, 2019, the Mississippi State Board of Pharmacy shared DOM's Provider Notice with all registered Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) users via and email.

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Important Links:

- **Opioid Prior Authorization Packet:**
 - <https://medicaid.ms.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Opioid-Packet.pdf>
- **Division of Medicaid's Preferred Drug List (PDL):**
 - <https://medicaid.ms.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/MSPDLeffective07012019.pdf>
- **Guidance for when naloxone should be co-prescribed:**
 - <https://www.hhs.gov/opioids/sites/default/files/2018-12/naloxone-coprescribing-guidance.pdf>
- **Morphine Equivalent Daily Dose (MEDD) Calculator examples:**
 - <https://www.oregonpainguidance.org/opioidmedcalculator/>
 - <https://www.easycalculation.com/medical/opioid-conversion-calculator.php>
 - <http://www.agencymeddirectors.wa.gov/Calculator/DoseCalculator.htm>
- **Reduce Risk of Opioid Overdose Deaths by Avoiding and Reducing Co-Prescribing Benzodiazepines**
 - <https://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Medicare-Learning-Network-MLN/MLNMattersArticles/downloads/SE19011.pdf>
- **CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain**
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/prescribing/guideline.html>