**Patient Responsibilities When Taking Opioids**

**Provider: Designee:**

**Case Manager: PACT Team:**

Both patients and prescribers have important responsibilities when using opioids to treat chronic pain. Opioids are powerful pain medications that can have very serious side effects including death. Your health and safety are very important to us. We need your help to make sure your treatment is safe and effective. The following responsibilities are intended to aid in the safe and effective use of these medications. Unsafe use may result in the discontinuation of opioids as part of the treatment plan.

1. The goal of pain medication is to improve the function and quality of life. Opioids are not intended or likely to completely eliminate all pain. Providers will work together with patients to find the most appropriate treatment for their chronic pain.
2. Failure to use opioids responsibly increases the risk of harm and may result in discontinuation of opioids as part of the treatment plan.
3. Opioid pain medications may not be prescribed on an initial visit.
4. VA providers may decline to renew or refill medications prescribed by another provider.
5. Opioid pain medications for chronic pain may only be prescribed by your designated provider AND at scheduled appointments during regular clinic hours.
6. Renewal and continuation of pain medication for chronic pain requires monthly assessments of the condition being treated. Attendance to all appointments and adherence to pain management recommendations is important for the safe use of opioids.
7. Opioid prescriptions may only be obtained from a single pharmacy – the VA pharmacy is the preferred source. Please tell your provider if you prefer to have your prescriptions filled by a different pharmacy. All prescriptions must be documented in the VA electronic medical record.
8. Obtaining pain medications from multiple sources is unsafe and may result in discontinuation of opiate pain medications. Prior to filling opioid prescriptions VA staff will check with VA and non-VA Pharmacies to see if opioid prescriptions were obtained from other sources.
9. Long term pain management may require a referral to a pain specialist. Patients unwilling to see a pain specialist may result in the discontinuation of opioids as part of the treatment plan.
10. Taking medications exactly as directed is important for their safe use. Patients must not change how they take their medications without first talking with their provider.
11. Giving or selling medication to anyone else, including family members is illegal and will result in reassessment of the treatment plan. Obtaining pain medication from anyone except your provider may be harmful and is illegal.
12. Patients are solely responsible for the safekeeping of their medications and should treat medications as they would money or any valuable possession. All medications must be kept secure (under lock and key if need be) and away from children and or other family members.
13. The VA has no obligation to replace LOST OR STOLEN prescriptions or medications. Lost or stolen medications should be reported to police and your Primary Care Provider.
14. Early renewals or refills of pain medication prescriptions are NOT permitted. Frequent requests for "emergency" renewals suggest unsafe use and may result discontinuation of opioids as part of the treatment plan. If a prescription runs out early for any reason (for example, if lost or taken more than prescribed), the provider may not prescribe extra medication.
15. Pain medications may lead to addiction. If necessary, referral to an addiction specialist as part of the treatment plan may be necessary.
16. Taking pain medication improperly or using pain medications in combination with other medicines or substances can result in an interaction and/or overdose, possibly causing harm, brain damage or death. Patients are encouraged to tell their providers(s) if have used mood altering substances such as alcohol, marijuana, sedatives, tranquilizers, or any illegal drugs.
17. Abusive behavior or harassment toward any VA staff will not be tolerated.
18. Forging or falsifying prescriptions, records or documents, misrepresenting the facts and/or misleading providers or VA staff in order to obtain pain medication prescriptions are serious offenses, and may result in the activity being reported to the VA Police and a change in the treatment plan.
19. VA staff conducts periodic unscheduled drug screens to ensure patient safety. A change in treatment plan may occur if:
20. drugs not prescribed are found in blood or urine
21. medications prescribed are not found in blood or urine
22. excessive levels of drugs prescribed are found in blood or urine
23. refusal of the screen or test
24. Pain medications pose a serious risk to children. Patients must inform their Primary Care Provider immediately if they suspect they are pregnant, attempting to become pregnant or breast feeding.
25. Common adverse effects of pain medication therapy include constipation, nausea, sweating, sleepiness and itchiness of the skin. Increased drowsiness may occur when starting pain medication therapy or when increasing the dosage.
26. Opioids may impair one’s ability to operate machinery safely. Patients must refrain from driving a motor vehicle or operating dangerous machinery while under the influence of pain medications.