

# 2017 Opioid Prescribing Rule

## What you need to know

- Opioids are powerful and when appropriate useful pain killers.
- Opioids are highly addictive.
- Opioid addiction and overdose is a growing problem.
- Opioid use at young ages increases the potential for addiction later in life.
- Prescribers play a role in the supply and use of opioids in our communities.
- People don't know there are other effective ways to deal with pain.



## What is this rule and what does it do?

The rules provide legal requirements for prescribing opioids in treating acute (sudden and short-term) pain in order to minimize opportunities for misuse, abuse, diversion, addiction and overdoses. Anyone can become addicted to opioids. The rule is intended to assist prescribers and patients by providing a framework so that patients will be prescribed only the opioids they need and not more.

The rules include requirements for prescribers to provide patient education about the risks of taking opioids, safe storage and proper disposal of opioids. Every patient needs to know that these drugs are hazardous, that they can cause addiction and death.

The rule sets new 'defaults' for prescribing for pain. Studies have shown there is a wide variety in prescribing habits — between medical professions and even within the same practices. Studies also show that many patients are prescribed twice as much medication as they need or more.

We need to flip the presumption that a patient needs opioids to manage pain. Now, doctors will assess non-opioid and non-pharmacological

treatments before opioids are prescribed, not as a last resort. And when opioids are prescribed, they are prescribed for only as much a patient needs and for the shortest duration possible.

In writing the rule, the Department of Health hosted more than 25 separate meetings and conference calls with various providers and stakeholders including physicians, pharmacists and dentists.

The Department continues to reach out to prescribers, insurance providers, and members of the public to share information and resources about the safe use and disposal of opioids

## When does the rule take effect?

The chronic pain section of the rule took effect in 2015, the acute pain and universal precaution sections are effective on July 1, 2017.

## Will this prevent a health care provider from prescribing opioids to a patient in pain?

NO, nothing in the rule prevents a provider from prescribing opioids as a part of the treatment of pain.