KNOW YOUR MEDS
KENTUCKY

CDC Checklist: Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain

For primary care providers treating adults (18+) with chronic pain ≥ 3 months, excluding cancer, palliative, and end-of-life care

CHECKLIST

When CONSIDERING long-term opioid therapy

- ☐ Set realistic goals for pain and function based on diagnosis (e.g., walk around the block).
- ☐ Check that non-opioid therapies tried and optimized.
- ☐ Discuss benefits and risks (e.g., addiction, overdose) with patient.
- ☐ Evaluate risk of harm or misuse.
  - Discuss risk factors with patient.
  - Check prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) data.
  - Check urine drug screen.
- ☐ Set criteria for stopping or continuing opioids.
- ☐ Assess baseline pain and function (e.g., PEG scale).
- ☐ Schedule initial reassessment within 1–4 weeks.
- ☐ Prescribe short-acting opioids using lowest dosage on product labeling; match duration to scheduled reassessment.

If RENEWING without patient visit

- ☐ Check that return visit is scheduled ≤ 3 months from last visit.

When REASSESSING at return visit

Continue opioids only after confirming clinically meaningful improvements in pain and function without significant risks or harm.

- ☐ Assess pain and function (e.g., PEG); compare results to baseline.
- ☐ Evaluate risk of harm or misuse:
  - Observe patient for signs of over-sedation or overdose risk.
    - If yes: Taper dose.
  - Check PDMP.
  - Check for opioid use disorder if indicated (e.g., difficulty controlling use).
    - If yes: Refer for treatment.
- ☐ Check that non-opioid therapies optimized.
- ☐ Determine whether to continue, adjust, taper, or stop opioids.
- ☐ Calculate opioid dosage morphine milligram equivalent (MME).
  - If ≥ 50 MME /day total (≥ 50 mg hydrocodone; ≥ 33 mg oxycodone), increase frequency of follow-up; consider offering naloxone.
  - Avoid ≥ 90 MME /day total (≥ 90 mg hydrocodone; ≥ 60 mg oxycodone), or carefully justify; consider specialist referral.
- ☐ Schedule reassessment at regular intervals (≥ 3 months).

Find more resources for patients and physicians at:
www.kyma.org/know-your-meds-ky

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