



DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Promoting and protecting health, well-being, self-sufficiency, and safety of all in Marin County.



PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

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New Community-wide Standards for Prescribing Opioid Pain Medications

There were 49 drug overdose deaths in Marin County in 2012, according to recently released California Vital Statistics data. This was the highest ever number of drug overdoses for Marin, and was more than four times the number of motor vehicle accident deaths in that year.

The number of prescriptions written for narcotics in Marin County more than doubled between 2004 and 2013. This mirrors national trends in prescribing patterns and correlates to increased drug overdoses and addiction services admissions.

To help address this emerging public health problem, Marin County Emergency Departments have adopted community-wide standards for prescribing opioid pain medicines. These are available below. The standards, collaboratively developed by all of Marin County's Emergency Departments, the Department of Health and Human Services, and Emergency Medical Services, are designed to balance the commitment to safe pain control with measures to limit the harm of prescription drug misuse. Because the majority of pain killer prescriptions are written in Primary Care settings, a similar set of standards will be developed in collaboration with Primary Care providers.

With a common understanding of what can be expected in opioid prescribing as a community, patients and providers can better coordinate care to ensure safe and effective pain management.

SAFE PAIN MEDICINE PRESCRIBING IN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS



- We care about you. We are committed to treating you safely.
- Pain relief treatment can be complicated. Mistakes or abuse of pain medicine can cause serious health problems and even death.
- Our emergency department is committed to providing safe pain relief options. Many types of pain can be safely and effectively managed without prescription medications.

For your SAFETY, we follow these rules when treating your pain:

1. We look for and treat emergencies. We use our best judgment when treating pain. These recommendations follow legal and ethical advice.
2. You should have only one provider and one pharmacy helping you with chronic pain. We do not usually prescribe pain medication if you already receive pain medicine from another health care provider.
3. If prescription pain medication is needed, we generally only give you a small amount.
4. We do not refill lost or stolen prescriptions. If your prescription is stolen, please contact the police.
5. We do not prescribe long-acting pain medicines: OxyContin, MSContin, Fentanyl (Duragesic), Methadone, Opana ER, Exalgo and others.
6. We do not provide missing doses of Subutex, Suboxone, or Methadone.
7. We do not usually give shots for flare-ups of chronic pain. Medicines taken by mouth may be offered instead.
8. Health care laws, including HIPAA, allow us to ask for your medical records. These laws allow us to share information with other health care providers who are treating you.
9. We may ask you to show a photo ID when you receive a prescription for pain medicines.
10. We use the California Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, called CURES. This statewide computer system tracks narcotic and other controlled substance prescriptions.

If you need help with
substance abuse or addiction, call
(415) 755-2345
for confidential referral and treatment.

These standards were developed by Marin County Department of Health and Human Services, Marin County Emergency Medical Services and all Marin County hospital Emergency Departments.



If you are a person with a disability and require this document in an alternate format (example: Braille, Large Print, Audiotape, CD-ROM), you may request an alternate format by calling: (415) 473-4167(Voice)/(415) 473-3232 (TTY) or by e-mail at: cmaj@marincounty.org