

New Medicare Opiate Edits for 2019

Beginning 1/1/2019, all Medicare prescription drug plans will institute new policies on opiate prescriptions. These policies are being implemented to provide improved safety edits when opiates are dispensed at the pharmacy and drug management programs for members whose prescription claims history may indicate they may be at-risk for misuse or abuse of opioids or other frequently abused drugs (e.g. benzodiazepines).

CMS is requiring that plans have a “hard edit” in place for an initial prescription of up to seven days of therapy for an opiate naïve member. The edit at the pharmacy will determine if the member is opiate naïve if there are no claims for an opiate within the previous 90 days. The seven-day supply limit will also exclude the following members:

- Enrolled in hospice
- Receiving active cancer care
- Reside in a long-term care facility
- Enrolled in palliative care

Members who receive buprenorphine for medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorder will not be affected by this edit.

Prescribers and/or pharmacists may contact CVS Caremark to override the edit if the member is exempt from the edit because of meeting one of the exclusion criteria. Members who do not meet the opiate history requirement or one of the other exclusion requirements will be limited to a seven day supply of the opiate medication and will not be eligible for a transition supply. Members or prescribers may request a coverage determination. Subsequent prescriptions written by the prescriber will not be subject to this limit. All prescriptions will still be subject to any MVP coverage determination requirements, including formulary exception and quantity limits.

Pharmacists may contact prescribers if the cumulative morphine milligram equivalent (MME) per day across all of the opiate prescriptions reaches or exceeds 90 MME to obtain clinical information and confirm prescriber intent. This consultation may not be required with all every subsequent prescription written for the same patient. This edit is not a prescribing limit.