Checklist for prescribing opioids to treat chronic pain

- Utilize non-pharmacological therapy and non-opioid pharmacologic as a first line therapy to treat pain before considering opioid therapy.

If opioids are indicated and required to treat chronic pain

- Inform patient of the risks and benefits* of the treatment, including nausea, constipation, respiratory depression and risk of addiction in susceptible patients.
- Prescribe the lowest effective dosage of immediate-release opioids. Do not prescribe extended release/long-acting opioids* for the treatment of chronic pain.
- Avoid prescribing more than 7 days. Three days or less will usually be sufficient. More than 5-7 days will rarely be needed.
- Inform patient that the use of illicit drugs or alcohol is prohibited while using controlled substances.
- Inform patients of the need for safe storage and safe disposal of opioid medications.

Use additional discretion if patient is

- Under 24 years-old
- Has underlying mental health issues
- Has a history of substance use
- A female of child-bearing age

Additional steps for patient safety

- Check the state Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) query (where access is available)^3
- Perform a mental health assessment^4
- Perform a substance abuse risk evaluation^5
- Perform a urine drug test if clinically indicated

Continued patient care

- Re-evaluate or consider referral if patient requires opioid treatment beyond 7 days.
- See Checklist for prescribing opioids to treat chronic pain for daily opioid therapy that reaches a duration of 6 weeks or addresses a chronic pain condition.

* Commonly used immediate release opioids include: codeine, hydrocodone, and oxycodone (all three either alone or in combination with acetaminophen or NSAID), hydromorphone, oxymorphone, oxycodone, and fentanyl. Commonly used long acting opioids include methadone and ER/SR/CR formulations of morphine, oxycodone, oxymorphone, and fentanyl.
Additional resources for prescribers

1. **Assessing Benefits and Harms of Opioid Therapy** (CDC)
2. Safe storage and safe disposal resources
   - **Promote Safe Storage and Disposal of Opioids and All Medications** (AAFP)
   - **Disposal of Unused Medicines: What You Should Know** (FDA)
3. **What Healthcare Providers Need to Know about PDMPs** (CDC)
4. Validated tools for mental health assessments
   - **Patient Health Questionnaire-2 (PHQ-2)** or **Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9)** (to screen for depression)
   - **Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item (GAD-7)** (to screen for anxiety)
5. Validated tools for substance abuse risk screens
   - **Opioid Risk Tool (ORT)**
   - **Screener and Opioid Assessment for Patients with Pain-Revised (SOAPP-R)**
   - **Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST-10)**