

Opioid Prescribing and Alternative Therapies for Neighborhood INTEGRITY Members

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Prescription opioids can be used to help relieve moderate-to-severe pain and are often prescribed following a surgery or injury. While these medications can be an important part of treatment, their use can lead to greater risk of addiction, accidental overdose and death. The prolonged use of opioids can also lead to tolerance and physical dependence. Even when taken as directed, the use of prescription opioids can have a number of side effects like constipation, nausea, vomiting, dry mouth, sleepiness, dizziness, confusion, depression, irritability, itching and difficulty in breathing.

Treatment options that don't involve opioids

Chronic pain can often be managed without opioids, and many other options have been shown to work more effectively with fewer side effects. Examples include:

- Over-the-counter medications like Tylenol (acetaminophen), Advil (ibuprofen), and Aleve (naproxen)
- Non-opioid prescriptions such as lidocaine and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
- Physical therapy and exercise
- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- Some medications that are also used for depression or seizures

How can you help protect against overdose risk, even in patients utilizing opioids long term?

Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island (Neighborhood) recommends and encourages the co-prescribing of naloxone and opioids. In the event of an opioid overdose, having this rescue agent available could save the member's life.

Alternative treatments to opioids for INTEGRITY (Medicare-Medicaid Plan) members covered by Neighborhood

Neighborhood INTEGRITY covers additional services that can help treat or manage pain. Prior authorization may be required. Some examples of these services are:

- Acupuncture for chronic low back pain
- Chiropractic services
- Physical therapy