

## 7-Day Limit on Initial Opioid Prescriptions

The San Francisco Health Plan (SFHP) is responding to the national and local opioid addiction crisis by instituting drug use policies aimed at safer use of opioid pain medications. **Beginning January 2018, initial opioid prescriptions for acute pain treatment will be limited to a seven (7) day supply.** There are automated exceptions for chronic pain, cancer, hospice and palliative care. Subsequent opioid prescriptions for the same patient will bypass this restriction, but are still subject to the previously existing SFHP and legal limits on refills and day supply.

According to advice from the CDC, limiting the length of opioid first prescription exposure to a seven day supply reduces the likelihood of dependence and long-term opioid use. Over the past year, nine states (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont) have added limits to initial opioid prescriptions by statute or agency rule. Many health plans and chain pharmacies are also instituting voluntary initial opioid prescription limits. These actions are aimed at significantly reducing the number of people newly dependent upon or addicted to opioid pain medications.

Please review the [\*CDC MMWR Weekly Report Vol 66/No.10 March 17, 2017\*](#) for more information on the characteristics that increase probability of long-term opioid use. Outlined below are frequently asked questions (FAQs) from health care providers on this new 7-Day Limit on Initial Opioid Prescriptions.

### SFHP FAQ Guide for the 7-Day Limit on Initial Opioid Rxs

#### 1.) What are the limits being placed on short-acting opioid prescriptions?

Effective 1/5/2018, San Francisco Health Plan will limit the first prescription for a short-acting opioid medication to a seven day supply, down from 30 day supply.

A prescription for a short-acting opioid medication is considered an initial prescription if the member has not received a prescription for any opioid medication in the last 180 days.

#### 2.) What is the goal of this restriction?

The goal of this restriction is to limit instances of unintended long-term opioid use. This strategy is in line with current CDC guidelines.

#### 3.) Does this limit apply to all prescribers?

No. Some prescribers, such as oncologists and those specializing in hospice care, will be added to a list of prescribers who bypass the limit.

#### 4.) Which prescribers will bypass the limit?

Currently, all prescribers who are in network as of 11/21/2017 will bypass the limit. As SFHP reaches out to clinics, this list will be narrowed.

Prescribers who bypass the limit should be those who would routinely write prescriptions for short-acting opioids over a seven days' supply. This would include, but not be limited to, providers specialized in oncology and palliative care.

**5.) Will this apply to members with cancer?**

No, members with cancer are exempt from the limit. If they have picked-up a prescription for an antineoplastic agent in the past 180 days, this will happen automatically.

**6.) What happens if a member with cancer is not on any antineoplastic agents?**

If a member has not had any anti-neoplastic agents in the past 180 days, a Prior Authorization would be required in order for them to get over a seven day supply.

**7.) What if I have a patient that I intend to start on a greater than seven day supply of opioids and I am not on the list of prescribers who bypass the limit?**

Prescribers with a patient that has a clinical rationale to exceed the seven day supply limit should submit a Prior Authorization for that patient to SFHP. This Prior Authorization should include the clinical rationale along with the expected duration of treatment.

**8.) If a patient has had a prescription for an opioid previously within the last 180 days, will the seven day supply limit apply?**

No, in this case the seven day supply limit will not apply. Other limits – such as the #120 tablet limit – will still apply as usual.

**9.) Does this restriction apply to long-acting opioids?**

No, this edit applies to short-acting opioids.

**10.) Does this restriction apply to buprenorphine?**

No, this edit does not apply to medications for the treatment of opioid use disorder.

**11.) I have a new patient who has historically been on opioids started before they became an SFHP member. Will they be subject to the seven day supply limit?**

These patients are eligible to bypass the limit, but it will not happen automatically if they have no prior opioid prescription claim through SFHP. In order for these patients to bypass the edit, the prescriber will need to submit a Prior Authorization. This Prior Authorization should include the diagnosis the opioid is being used for and the expected duration of therapy.

Patient group or prescriber	Eligible for exemption	Additional steps required
Provider on the permanent exemption list	Yes	None
Hospice Patient	Yes	PA required if written by a non-exempt provider
Cancer Patient on an anti-neoplastic agent	Yes	None
Cancer Patient not on an anti-neoplastic agent	Yes	PA required if written by a non-exempt provider
New members on chronic opioids	Yes	PA required, including diagnosis and expected duration of treatment