

Cumulative Morphine Equivalent Dose (MED) for Opioid Analgesic Therapy

Override(s)	Approval Duration
Cumulative Morphine Equivalent Dose	Initial Request: 3 months Maintenance Therapy: Additional authorization required every 6 months Individuals receiving for terminal diagnosis and receiving palliative care/end-of-life therapy: Lifetime Individuals receiving for cancer related pain: 1 year

Medications
All Opioids

APPROVAL CRITERIA

Requests for more than 90 mg MED (morphine equivalent dose) per day of opioid analgesics may be approved for the following (VA/DoD 2022, CDC 2022):

- I. Individual has been diagnosed with cancer and appropriate cancer pain management requires dosing that exceeds the restricted amount;
- OR**
- II. Individual has a terminal illness and appropriate pain management requires dosing that exceeds the restricted amount;

OR

- III. Individual meets one of the following:
 - A. Individual is stabilized on current dose and opioid utilization at that dose is effective in reducing pain and/or increasing function; **OR**
 - B. Individual has obtained partial pain relief at lower doses of opioids and dose escalation is clinically appropriate;

AND

- IV. Individual will be routinely monitored regarding continued improvement in pain and/or function as well as the absence of aberrant behaviors (including but not limited to: obtaining prescriptions from other providers, obtaining opioids from non-medical sources, forgery/alteration of prescriptions, recurrent episodes of prescription loss or theft, recurrent episodes of running short of medication supply and/or repeated requests for early refills). (AMDG 2015).

Key References:

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3. Lexi-Comp ONLINE™ with AHFS™, Hudson, Ohio: Lexi-Comp, Inc.; 2025; Updated periodically.
4. Advanced Opioid Converter. GlobalRPh.com [Internet database]. URL: <http://www.globalrph.com/opioidconverter2.htm>.
5. American Society of Interventional Pain Physicians (07/2012). "American Society of Interventional Pain Physicians (ASIPP) guidelines for responsible opioid prescribing in chronic non-cancer pain: Part 2--guidance". *Pain physician* (1533-3159), 15 (3 suppl), p. S67.
6. Dowell D, Haegerich TM, Chou R. CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain — United States, 2016. *MMWR Recomm Rep* 2016;65:1–49. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.rr6501e1>.
7. Dowell D, Ragan KR, Jones CM, Baldwin GT, Chou R. CDC clinical practice guideline for prescribing opioids for pain – United States, 2022. *MMWR Recomm Rep*. 2022;71(No. RR-3):1-95. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.rr7103a1>.
8. The Effectiveness and Risks of Long-Term Opioid Treatment of Chronic Pain. October 2014. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. Available from: <http://www.ahrq.gov/research/findings/evidence-based-reports/opioidstp.html>.
9. FDA Drug Safety Communication: FDA restricts use of prescription codeine pain and cough medicines and tramadol pain medicines in children; recommends against use in breastfeeding women. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. 4-20-2017. Available from: <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/drugsafety/ucm549679.htm>.
10. VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline for Opioid Therapy for Chronic Pain. Department of Veterans Affairs/Department of Defense. Version 3.0 – 2017. Available from: <https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/Pain/cot/VADoDOTCPG022717.pdf>.
11. VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline. (2022). Use of Opioids in the Management of Chronic Pain Work Group. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
12. Washington State Agency Medical Directors' Group. Interagency guideline on opioid dosing for chronic non-cancer pain: an educational aid to improve care and safety with opioid treatment. Olympia (WA): Washington State Department of Labor and Industries; June 2015. Available from: <http://www.agencymeddirectors.wa.gov/Files/2015AMDGOpioidGuideline.pdf>
13. US Food and Drug Administration. FDA Drug Safety Communication: FDA requires labeling changes for prescription opioid cough and cold medicines to limit their use to adults 18 years and older. January 11, 2018. Available from: <https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm590435.htm>.
14. Use of Opioids in the Management of Chronic Pain Work Group. VA/DoD clinical practice guideline for the use of opioids in the management of chronic pain. 2022. Available at: <https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/Pain/cot/VADoDOpioidsCPG.pdf>.

Federal and state laws or requirements, contract language, and Plan utilization management programs or policies may take precedence over the application of this clinical criteria.

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