



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE ★ DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION  
**DIVERSION CONTROL DIVISION**

Dear DEA-Registered Practitioner - February 2018

**CDC's Recommendations for the Prescribing of Opioid Pain Medications**

**Dear DEA-Registered Practitioner:**

In March, 2016, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published its "CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain" to provide recommendations for the prescribing of opioid pain medication for patients 18 and older in primary care settings. Recommendations focus on the use of opioids in treating chronic pain (pain lasting longer than 3 months or past the time of normal tissue healing) outside of active cancer treatment, palliative care, and end-of-life care.

CDC's Guideline is part of a comprehensive approach to addressing the opioid overdose epidemic and is one step toward a more systematic approach to the prescribing of opioids, while ensuring that patients with chronic pain receive safer and effective pain management. According to the CDC, The Guideline's twelve recommendations, published in August 2017, are based on three key principles:

1. Non-opioid therapy is preferred for chronic pain outside of active cancer, palliative, and end-of-life care. Opioids should only be used when their benefits are expected to outweigh their substantial risks.
2. When opioids are used, the lowest possible effective dosage should be prescribed to reduce risks of opioid use disorder and overdose. Clinicians should start low and go slow.
3. Providers should always exercise caution when prescribing opioids and monitor all patients closely. Clinicians should minimize risk to patients—whether checking the state prescription drug monitoring program, or having an 'off-ramp' plan to taper.

You are receiving this email as part of DEA's effort to improve its communication with its more than 1.7 million registrants while simultaneously improving the dissemination of the CDC Guidelines to those authorized to prescribe opioids.

A copy of CDC's publication entitled, "Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain: Recommendations" may be found at: [https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/Guidelines\\_Factsheet-a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/Guidelines_Factsheet-a.pdf).

Additionally, an Interactive Training Webinar for providers who prescribe opioids may be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/training/index.html>.

*Taken from [CDC.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) - More than 11 million people abused prescription opioids in 2016.*



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