

# New Law for Prescribing Opioids (Narcotics)

State of Tennessee, Effective July 1, 2018

The state of Tennessee is limiting how opioid medicines can be prescribed.

## Why is the law changing?

We are in the middle of a health crisis in Tennessee:

- Every day, at least 3 Tennesseans die from an opioid-related overdose.
- Each year in Tennessee, more opioid prescriptions are written than there are people living in the state.
- Beginning with your first prescription, how long you take opioids and how much you take greatly affect whether you will have a problem with long-term use and abuse.
- People can become addicted to opioids much sooner than we used to think.

There are many risks and possible side effects to taking opioids. Yet, over time, they do not work any better than other kinds of pain medicine.

## What are the risks and possible side effects of taking opioids?

Risks and possible side effects include:

- Allergic reactions
- Nausea (feeling sick at your stomach), vomiting (throwing up), and constipation
- Overdose (which could result in death)

- Impaired judgment and inability to operate machines or drive motor vehicles
- Physical dependence or addiction
- Tolerance (the medicine may become less effective over time) and failure to relieve pain
- Changes in sexual function, usually related to lowered testosterone.

There are other risks and possible side effects as well.

### For Women of Childbearing Age

There are special risks for women who are or become pregnant while taking opioids:

- The baby may be born dependent on opioids (neonatal abstinence syndrome).
- The long-term effects of the mother's use of opioids on fetal and child development are not fully understood and may be harmful.

If you are of childbearing age, you must be counseled on birth control. You must also agree to tell your providers if you plan to become pregnant or believe that you are pregnant while taking this medicine.

Talk with your personal provider or contact local public health agencies or family planning facilities for low-cost or free birth control.

## What is the law changing?

Here are some of the main changes in the law:

- You must sign a consent form to be treated with opioids. By signing the consent, you agree
  - to take your medicine only as prescribed
  - not to take certain other medicines while you are taking opioids
  - to get your prescription only from your provider or a provider covering for your provider
  - to fill your prescription at only one pharmacy
  - not to share, sell, or let others have access to your medicine.
- Your provider will have to consider other options for controlling your pain for periods of more than 3 days.
- Your provider will be limited in the supply of opioids that he or she can prescribe.
- Your diagnosis will be printed on your paper prescription.

## Who is exempt from these rules?

You are exempt from the new limitations if you are getting medicine for 3 or fewer days.

You may also be exempt if you are being treated

- for cancer, sickle cell disease, chronic pain, severe burns, or trauma
- in hospice, certain licensed care facilities, or a drug treatment program using methadone, buprenorphine, or naltrexone
- by a pain management specialist.

Talk with your provider about what these new rules mean for you.

And let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

**For more information, go to [tn.gov/opioids](https://tn.gov/opioids).**