

Tennessee Law for Prescribing Opioids (Narcotics)

As of July 1, 2018

The state of Tennessee has a law that limits how we can prescribe you opioid medicine. Some of these opioids include:

- hydrocodone
- fentanyl
- oxycodone
- tramadol and more.

Why do we have this law?

When it comes to opioids, we have a health crisis in Tennessee.

- Every day, at least 3 peoples die from an opioid overdose in our state.
- Each year, the number of prescriptions written for opioids is more than the number of people living in our state.
- When you're first prescribed opioids, how much you take and how long you take them can affect if you'll have a problem with them in the future.
- You can become addicted to opioids much sooner than we used to think.

What does the law say?

We know laws can be confusing. Here are some main parts of the law to help you understand what this means for you.

- You have to sign a consent form to be treated with opioids. When you sign this you agree to:
 - take your medicine only as prescribed
 - not take certain other medicines while you take opioids
 - only get your prescription from your provider (or a provider who's standing in for them that day)
 - only fill your prescription at 1 pharmacy
 - not sell, share, or let others have access your medicine.
- If you need more than 3 days of opioids to control your pain, your provider will have to consider other options to treat you.
- Your provider is limited to how much opioid medicine they can prescribe.
- Your diagnosis will be printed on your paper prescription.
- Your provider might have to give you Naloxone (Narcan) with each opioid prescription. Naloxone can:
 - help you in case you accidentally take too many opioids. This is called an overdose.
 - reverse the deadly effects of an overdose.
- You might need an in-person or telehealth appointment to get your opioid medicine refilled.

What are the side effects of opioids?

Anytime you take them, there are always side effects. Some of these include:

- more risk that you can overdose
- your pain gets worse over time from always taking opioids
- changes in sexual function because of low estrogen or testosterone
- your ability to drive motor vehicles or operate heavy machines
- your bones get weak (osteoporosis)
- your immune system gets weak
- you feel sedated
- you become addicted
- you're constipated
- you're depressed.

What if I'm pregnant or plan to get pregnant?

Before we can prescribe you opioids, you'll need to talk with us if you plan to become pregnant or think that you're pregnant. There are many risks if you become pregnant when you take opioids. Some of these include:

- your baby can be born addicted to opioids. This is called neonatal abstinence syndrome.
- your use of opioids may have long-term effects on your baby's development.

We'll also need to talk to you about birth control. There are many ways to find free or low-cost birth control and we'll share these resources with you.

Does this law apply to everyone?

It depends and is based on how much medicine you're being prescribed or your health condition.

You can be exempt from Tennessee opioid laws if:

- your prescription is for 3 or fewer days
- you're being treated for:
 - cancer
 - chronic pain
 - severe burns
 - sickle cell disease
 - or trauma.
- you're being treated in:
 - certain licensed care facilities
 - drug treatment programs that use buprenorphine, methadone, or naltrexone
 - a hospice center.

Learn more

For more information, go to: TnTogether.com or scan this QR code:

