

## Opioids (narcotics)

Having the best possible recovery following your workplace injury is important. We are here to help you and want to ensure you receive the right treatment at the right time.

Narcotics (opioid analgesics) are a group of medications that are commonly used to treat pain. They include:

- Percocet®
- OxyNEO
- OxyContin® (discontinued in 2012)
- Tylenol® #1, 2, 3, or 4
- Tramacet®

In addition to deaths, dependence and abuse, multiple side effects are associated with chronic narcotic use. Medical evidence tells us that narcotic medication can be beneficial in the initial few weeks following an injury or surgery.

There is also evidence that as healing occurs narcotic use should discontinue within the initial two to four week period. Long term use, especially beyond 12 weeks post injury or surgery can be harmful to you.

The goal of prescribing narcotics is that it:

- helps improve your function (activity level).
- decreases your pain.
- supports a safe and early return to work.
- prevents overall harm to you.

### WCB-Alberta policy sets limits on payment for narcotics

WCB-Alberta [Policy 04-06](#) states that your case manager can authorize payment of narcotics relating to non-cancer pain for up to 12 weeks following an injury or surgery.

This is in alignment with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta standard of practice for “Prescribing: Drugs with Potential for Misuse or Diversion” and the guidelines they endorse.

### Payment for narcotic medication beyond 12 weeks

Let your case manager know if both you and your physician feel you require prescribed narcotics beyond 12 weeks. Should this be the case, your case manager will send you a package of information and forms.

***Do you want to reduce or eliminate the amount of opioids you are currently taking?***

Call your case manager. Talk to your doctor. We can help.

You must take the package to your physician who will discuss it with you.

The completed forms must be returned to WCB-Alberta. Once they are on your claim file your case manager will review them along with the criteria outlined in [Policy 04-06](#) to decide if you can continue to be reimbursed for your narcotic medication.

In order to approve payment of narcotic medication beyond 12 weeks your case manager needs to:

- Have a signed treatment agreement between you and your physician on file.
- Confirm you are meeting the criteria outlined in Policy 04-06 which are:
  - The prescribed narcotic medication is part of a multi-disciplinary treatment plan for your pain management.
  - The prescribed narcotic medication is not the first line of treatment.
  - Only one physician is prescribing the narcotic medication (generally the treating physician).
  - There is evidence that the medication is helping to improve your function, decrease your pain and progress you towards return to work.
  - There is only one dispensing pharmacy.
  - There are no medical complications and/or side effects caused by the use of the medication.
- Receive regular reporting from your physician. Your physician must complete a report each time he/she sees you. These reports provide an update on your progress so that we can ensure you are getting the support you need towards returning to activity (including work) and decreasing pain.

## Your narcotic medication receipts

WCB-Alberta will reimburse you as long as payment for your narcotic medication is approved. You will need to send in your original prescription receipts for authorized reimbursement or make arrangements with your pharmacy to bill WCB-Alberta directly.

If you wish your pharmacy to bill us directly, be sure to provide your pharmacist with your claim number and ask them to call WCB-Alberta for pre-authorization.

*Note: OxyContin was discontinued in 2012. The replacement medication, OxyNEO, may be covered by WCB.*

Your case manager will work with you and can answer any question you may have about WCB payment for your narcotic medication.

## Additional resources

- [WCB Policy 04-06, Part II, A4](#)

