

PO Box 9232, Des Moines, IA 50306-9232

**IMPORTANT PLAN INFORMATION**

<Member First Name> <Member Last Name>

<Mailing Address Line 1>

<Mailing Address Line 2>

<City Name>, <State> <ZIP>

**Education on Opioid Risks and Alternative Treatments**

**This is important information about your prescription drug coverage.**

**Read this notice carefully.** For help, call one of the numbers listed on the last page under “For More Information and Help with This Notice.”

Date: <Date>

Enrollee’s Name: <Member First Name> <Member Last Name>

Member Number: <Member Account ID>

The purpose of this notice is to provide information about the risks of prolonged opioid use.

Your prescription claims indicate continuous use of opioid medication for more than 90 days.

Prescription opioids can be used to help relieve moderate-to-severe pain and are often prescribed following a surgery or injury, or for certain health conditions. While these medications can be an important part of treatment, they also carry serious risks of addiction, accidental overdose, and death. The prolonged use of opioids can also lead to tolerance (needing more of the medication for the same pain relief) and physical dependence (experiencing symptoms of withdrawal when a medication is stopped). Even when taken as directed, the use of prescription opioids can have several side effects like constipation, nausea, vomiting, dry mouth, sleepiness, dizziness, confusion, depression, irritability, itching, and difficulty in breathing.

It is important to work with your health care provider to make sure you are getting the safest, most effective care. You might be able to take other medications or do other things to help effectively manage your pain with less long-term risk.

**What Action Should You Take?**

Talk to your health care provider about ways to manage your pain that don’t involve prescription opioids. Some of these options may work better and have fewer risks and side effects. Education on treatment choices and the risks will help you and your provider to find safe and effective care for reaching your personal treatment goals.

**What treatment options don’t involve opioids?**

Chronic pain can often be managed without opioids, and many other options have been shown to work better with fewer side effects. Examples include:

* Over-the-counter medications like Tylenol® (acetaminophen), Advil (ibuprofen), and Aleve® (naproxen)
* Non-opioid prescriptions such as lidocaine and Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDS)
* Physical therapy and exercise
* Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
* Some medications that are also used for depression or seizures

**How to protect against overdose risk if opioid use is continued long-term?**

We recommend and encourage you to have a discussion with your doctor about getting a prescription for naloxone. Naloxone is a prescription drug that can be given during an opioid overdose and may reverse the effects. In the event of an opioid overdose, this rescue agent could save your life and provide some peace of mind for you and your family members to have available.

**What is medication-assisted treatment (MAT)?**

Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) is the use of medications in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, which is effective in the treatment of opioid use disorders (OUD) and can help some people to sustain recovery. There are three drugs approved by the FDA for the treatment of opioid dependence: buprenorphine, methadone, and naltrexone. All three of these treatments have been demonstrated to be safe and effective in combination with counseling and psychosocial support.

**What alternative treatments are covered by your plan?**

Non-opioid medications covered:

* NSAIDS (Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) like Ibuprofen
* GABA medications like Gabapentin or Pregabalin
* Local anesthetic topicals like Lidocaine patches and Lidocaine-prilocaine cream
* Some antidepressants like Duloxetine or Amitriptyline
* Naloxone products

Non-pharmacological therapies covered:

* Opioid treatment program services, which may include medications, substance use counseling, individual and group therapy, and toxicology testing
* Acupuncture for chronic low back pain
* Medicare-covered chiropractic services
* Physical therapy

**What additional resources are available to you?**

Visit **www.hhs.gov/opioids** for information about State and Federal public health resources that can help you learn more about opioid medications and how to use them safely. Visit [**www.medicare.gov/coverage/pain-management**](http://www.medicare.gov/coverage/pain-management) for information on Medicare coverage of pain management.

**For More Information and Help with This Notice**

For more information about any of the information in this notice, please contact Wellmark Advantage Health Plan (HMO) at:

Toll Free: 1-855-716-2555 TTY users: 711

Hours are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., local time, Monday through Friday, with weekend hours October 1 through March 31.

www.WellmarkAdvantageHealthPlan.com