

Position Statement on Opioid Use

WorkplaceNL's objective is to achieve the best possible outcome for people injured at work. We are committed to helping them get back to work and the activities that matter to them.

We recognize that opioids remain an acceptable treatment option for those with acute and chronic pain. However, taking opioids comes with potentially serious health risks such as developing tolerance, dependence, addiction and accidental death.

To mitigate risks and protect workers, we take proactive steps to monitor claims where health care providers have prescribed opioids and support the safeguards provided by the provincial government and national medical practice guidelines.

A workers' primary care provider manages their health care and prescribed medications related to workplace injury and illness. These provincially-licensed practitioners are required to comply with provincial programs and medical best practices when prescribing opioids.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, safeguards have been implemented with respect to opioids:

- Licensed practitioners prescribe opioids, in accordance with the Pharmaceutical Services Act, using secure delivery options, such as electronic platforms (CoreCare/e-fax), direct telephone contact with the pharmacy and government issued tamper-resistant prescription pads.
- Licensed practitioners are expected to follow the Canadian Medical Association's position on guidelines for opioid prescribing, found [here](#), when considering opioids as an option for pain control.
- Naloxone kits are available free-of-charge at distribution sites throughout the province, provided by the Department of Health and Community Services.
- Provincial Pharmacy Network links all pharmacies in the province so our health care professionals can easily access individual medication profiles. This helps to ensure pharmacists and other health care professionals make informed decisions about patient care.

WorkplaceNL also has internal safeguards. Specifically, we:

- Review claims with prolonged opioid prescriptions annually, or earlier.
- Use Policy HC-11 - Drug Formulary to guide coverage of select opioids based on the accepted workplace injury.
- Monitor opioid usage trends, in collaboration with our third-party drug administrator.
- Monitor changes to provincial programs, as well as the provincial and national trends regarding opioid use and abuse.

As well, we support the workers' primary care provider in referring clients to chronic pain specialists for complex chronic pain, opioid dependence, misuse and addiction management. We cover Suboxone and Methadone for workers who develop moderate to severe opioid dependence from work-related illness or injury, in conjunction with counseling and psychological support. Where in-patient rehabilitation is indicated, a medical review is required to ensure the use of adequate resources to support the worker.

While WorkplaceNL does not direct patient care, our health care services team is available to providers as a resource on any claim.