

# Opioids - WorkSafeNB

As part of our commitment to supporting workers while they recover from workplace injuries, WorkSafeNB has recently changed the way we manage opioids.

Opioids are a class of synthetic narcotic medications usually prescribed for treating pain associated with injury, disease or surgery. While opioids have therapeutic purposes, there are serious risks associated with their use including addiction, overdose and death.

With that in mind, [Policy 25-012 Medical Aid – Opioids](#) was reviewed as part of its 60-month review cycle, and included [extensive consultation with members of New Brunswick's medical community and the general public](#). As a result, we have updated the policy to align with provincial and national guidelines, reducing the maximum covered dose to 50 morphine milligram equivalents (MME) for 2 weeks, with any further coverage requiring medical review and limited to 90MME.

We have developed a [fact sheet for opioid prescribers](#) with a high-level summary of the changes, and an opioid conversion table for your convenience.



## Our opioid policy has changed - Update for prescribers

We have updated our policy to align with provincial and national guidelines and hope you will support us as we implement these improvements for our patients in New Brunswick. Having listened to feedback from the medical community, the following changes align with College of Physicians and Surgeons of New Brunswick (CPSNB) and Canadian Medical Association (CMA) guidelines.

### For new prescriptions...

- 1 We will fund maximum doses (initially 50 mg morphine equivalents [MME] per day) and limit the initial automatic approval to two weeks.
- 2 Further approval will be monitored for functional improvement and dosing limited to 90 MME per day.
- 3 We require used and unused fentanyl patches to be returned to the prescribing dispensary.

### For previous prescriptions...

- 4 The new dosing and timelines will not be applied retrospectively, however physicians prescribing outside these guidelines will be offered support for harm reduction measures moving forward.

50 MME/Day	90 MME/Day
50 mg of morphine	90 mg of morphine
33 mg of oxycodone (~ 2 tablets of oxycodone SR 15 mg)	60 mg of oxycodone (~ 2 tablets of oxycodone SR 30)
330 mg of codeine (~ 11 tablets of codeine 30 mg)	600 mg of codeine (~ 20 tablets of codeine 30 mg)
1 fentanyl transdermal patch of 12 mcg/hr	1 fentanyl transdermal patch of 25 mcg/hr
10 mg hydromorphone (~ 10 tablets of hydromorphone 1 mg)	18 mg hydromorphone (~ 9 tablets of hydromorphone 2 mg)



### More information

WorkSafeNB – Policy 25-012 Medical Aid – Opioids  
CPSNB – Guidelines for prescribing opioids  
CMA – Opioid therapy and chronic noncancer pain  
CMA – Management of opioid use disorders: a national clinical practice guideline

Questions about the new policy?  
You can reach us at 1 877 647-0777.

We provide an opioid prescribing booklet to ensure best practice and monitoring for injured workers who are receiving opioids.

Our CMO, Dr Paul Atkinson, sits as a member of the New Brunswick Opioid Prescribing Task Force, which is exploring best practice in the area of opioid prescribing and monitoring, with plans to make recommendations to the province in the near future.

Overall, we continue to see decreased levels of opioid approvals.

**Resources:**

Policy: <https://www.worksafenb.ca/media/1141/25-012.pdf>

Opioid booklet: [https://www.worksafenb.ca/docs/Opioid\\_Review\\_Doc\\_e.pdf](https://www.worksafenb.ca/docs/Opioid_Review_Doc_e.pdf)

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