Using prescription painkillers safely

Opioids are a type of prescription drug used to reduce pain, usually after surgery or an injury, or for cancer care. But when these drugs are misused, they can lead to overdose and addiction. Opioids should be avoided, or at least used very carefully.

**Work with your doctor**

If you are prescribed opioids for pain, you can avoid serious side effects, addiction, or other complications by working closely with your doctor. Make sure you understand your prescription and your doctor’s instructions. Do not mix opioids with alcohol, sleeping pills, or anti-anxiety drugs. These all increase your risk for an accidental overdose.

**Safety**

Keep pain medications in a safe place so that children or other household members do not use them. This can cause accidental poisoning or misuse. Call your local police station or pharmacy to find out how to dispose of unused drugs.

**Other options**

There are many other things that help relieve pain, aside from medication. Ask your doctor about:

- Acupuncture
- Chiropractors
- Meditation
- Psychotherapy
- Yoga
- Physical Therapy

**Get help**

If you are or someone you know is addicted to opioids, you can get help.

- Talk with your doctor.
- Call the county Drug and Alcohol Services program:
  - Santa Barbara County: **1-888-868-1649**
  - San Luis Obispo County: **1-800-838-1381**
Changes to the California Children’s Services Program

Starting July 2018, CenCal Health will be managing care for members who are part of California Children’s Services (CCS). This is so that your health care is better coordinated. CenCal Health will offer case management and authorization for the CCS program, like referrals, hospital stays, doctor visits, medications, and supplies.

The county CCS Medical Therapy Program will not change and will continue to provide medical therapy services to CCS members.

CenCal Health is also forming a Family Advisory Committee to involve families in the CCS transition. If you would like to participate, and you are a parent of a CCS child or are in the CCS program, contact CenCal Health.

If you have questions about the CCS transition or the Family Advisory Committee:

- Call CenCal Health at 1-877-814-1861
- Go to the CCS page at www.dhcs.ca.gov

What is health care fraud?

Health care fraud is the dishonest use of health plan services. Fraud is wrong and increases health care costs for us all. Here are examples of health care fraud:

- Someone uses a health plan ID card that does not belong to him or her.
- Someone sells medicines that were paid for by his or her health insurance.
- A doctor or facility bills for services that were not provided.

If you know of a situation like this, please tell us. The call is free and confidential. Call our Fraud Hotline at 1-866-775-3944. You can also learn more at www.cencalhealth.org. Click “Suspect Fraud” under the Members tab.

Nurse advice line

Do you need help and advice on home treatment? Are you wondering if you should go to your doctor or to the hospital? Call our free Nurse Advice Line at 1-800-524-5222, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Follow us!

Stay up-to-date with healthy tips, community resources, and CenCal Health news.
Caring for low back pain

Low back pain is a common problem for many people. It can be a dull ache or a sudden sharp pain. It is commonly caused by strained muscles. The good news is that it often gets better on its own.

When do I need to see a doctor?
Call your doctor if you have:
■ Numbness or tingling in your legs or feet
■ Severe pain that does not get better with rest
■ Weakness or pain in your legs
■ Pain for more than 2 to 3 weeks
■ Changes in bowel or bladder (incontinence)

What tests do I need?
Tests such as X-rays, CT scans, and MRIs are usually **not** needed for low back pain. These tests do not show anything that would change the treatment plan and can expose you to unnecessary testing and radiation.

How is back pain treated?
Some back pain goes away within a few days with no treatment at all. But if you need care for low back pain, talk with your doctor. Before pain pills, your doctor may suggest:
■ Creams and ointments
■ Hot or cold packs
■ Exercise
■ Other treatments (chiropractic, acupressure, or massage)

If these options don’t help, talk with your doctor again. You might need an over-the-counter or prescription medication. Be careful if you are given a prescription for an opioid pain reliever. These have serious risks, including side effects and addiction. Only use opioids as a last resort.

What else can I do to relieve or prevent low back pain?
■ Rest, but also try to do normal activities at your own pace.
■ Use correct posture when you sit, stand, and sleep. Keep your ears, shoulders, and hips in a straight line. Keep your head up and your stomach pulled in.
■ Ask your doctor what types of exercises you should do.
Transportation services
As a CenCal Health member, you have transportation services available to you, at no cost. Here is a summary of your benefits.

**Non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT)**
You can use Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) when you physically or medically are not able to get to your medical appointment by car, bus, or taxi and need assistance getting from your front door to the vehicle. Before getting NEMT, you need to request the service through your doctor, who will confirm the correct type of transportation to meet your medical condition. NEMT is an ambulance, litter van, wheelchair van, or air transport. NEMT is not a car, bus, or taxi.

**Non-medical transportation (NMT)**
You can use Non-Medical Transportation (NMT) when you are traveling to and from an appointment for a Medi-Cal service. The appointment or service can be with your primary or specialty provider or for pharmacy and durable medical equipment pick-ups within CenCal Health’s service area of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties. If you are traveling outside of the service area for medical appointments and services, CenCal Health must approve these medical services.

Non-Medical Transportation is available for dental appointments that are provided through Denti-Cal, specialty mental health and treatment for substance abuse through the county, and also for authorized California Children’s Services (CCS) appointments both in and outside of the services area.

**Cost to member**
There is no cost when transportation is authorized by CenCal Health.

**Requesting services**
To request transportation services, please speak with your provider. If you believe you need Non-Emergency Medical Transportation, your provider must provide more information to CenCal Health. If you need Non-Medical Transportation (meaning, you do not need assistance with getting from your front door to the vehicle), please call Ventura Transit System at 1-855-659-4600, or CenCal Health at 1-877-814-1861, at least 3 business days (Monday through Friday) before your appointment, or call as soon as you can when you have an urgent appointment.

If you have any questions about your transportation benefit and how it can work for you, please call CenCal Health’s Member Services Department at our toll-free telephone number, 1-877-814-1861. Please have your member ID card ready when you call.