



Dear Patient:

As your health care provider, your health, well-being, and comfort are of utmost importance to us. We know there is serious risk in taking prescribed pain medications (opioids) on a daily basis. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has extensively studied the use of opioids for treatment of pain and has provided recommendations for best practices. The State of Michigan has passed new laws that impact the prescribing of controlled substances.

Mercy Health is committed to improving the safety of our patients and the community by endorsing protocols and guidelines for patients under our care who are prescribed controlled substances (opioids, sedatives, and stimulants). Opioids are a class of drugs used to reduce pain. Some examples of prescribed opioids are morphine, oxycodone (Percocet®), hydromorphone (Dilaudid®), fentanyl (Duragesic®), hydrocodone (Norco®), tramadol (Ultram®), and methadone.

We know that pain management is very important. Our goal is to make sure that the benefits of your pain medication outweigh the risks of the severe health and safety concerns of long-term opioid use. Higher doses of opioids have **not** been shown to reduce pain over the long term. To provide you with the best possible care, we are implementing the CDC recommendations and the State of Michigan laws in our office and throughout the Mercy Health West Michigan regional system as a new policy.

This policy will include the following changes:

1. Discussing this new policy with your health care provider.	6. Scheduling an office visit more frequently depending on the dosage of opioid medication that you are taking and the risks involved.
2. Developing a pain management plan with your health care provider.	7. Tapering/reducing your opioid medications, if indicated.
3. Signing an Opioid Start Talking consent form and a Controlled Substance Agreement.	8. Referring to pain specialists, mental health providers, or other specialists to help you function at your highest level possible.
4. Providing a urine drug screen at least every 12 months and randomly as requested.	9. Prescribing naloxone (Narcan®), a medication that reverses the effects of opioids. This medication is given in case of an overdose and can be lifesaving (for you or others in your home).
5. Understanding that your doctor will be regularly checking the state Prescription Drug Monitoring Program that allows health care providers to see what medications have been prescribed for you.	10. Planning how to secure opioid medications to prevent access for others in your home and discussing how to properly dispose of unused opioid medications.

We remain committed to your overall health and wellness. We will work with you to find other options to help manage your pain, such as physical therapy, counseling, pain management programs, alternative therapies, and/or use of lower risk medications. Our goal, as always, is to provide you with the best and most up-to-date health care.

Sincerely,

Your Providers at Mercy Health