

The Arizona Opioid Epidemic Act

Protecting Individuals with Chronic Pain

The Arizona Opioid Act consists of a number of initiatives that combat the opioid epidemic, but also includes measures aimed at protecting those who suffer from chronic pain, including:

- Requiring insurance companies to make a determination on prior authorization requests for urgent health care services within 5 days and within 14 days for non-urgent health care services in order to ensure patients are treated as quickly as possible.
- Exceptions for individuals suffering from chronic pain, as indicated below.

Reducing Chances of Addiction

Reducing Chances of Addiction for Opioid Naive Patients

Studies show that the risk of addiction doubles at six days and then doubles again at 12. While there are patients who will need to be on opioids for longer periods of time, most of the time, a short duration is sufficient. A patient may get a refill of the prescription if necessary.

Placing a 5-Day Limit on Initial Opioid Prescription

Arizonans are being prescribed too many opioids, often in excess of the amount necessary to provide temporary pain management. 431 million pills were prescribed in 2016, enough for every man, woman and child in the state to have a two and a half week supply. Studies show the probability of opioid dependence sharply increases after five days. The Act places a 5-day limit on initial opioid prescriptions.

Placing a 90 MME Dosage Limit

Arizonans are being prescribed dangerously high doses of opioids, placing them at increased risk of overdose. Medical professionals measure the strength of a dosage by a measurement called morphine medical equivalents (MME) which equates the potency of different opioids into one standard value. Federal prescribing guidelines recommend doctors use caution in prescribing above 50 MME/day and extreme caution in prescribing above 90 MME/day.

Protecting Chronic Pain Sufferers

Compassion for Chronic Pain Sufferers

For Arizonans dealing with chronic pain and participating in a responsible treatment plan, opioids can be a miracle drug. Maintaining these treatment plans for people suffering from chronic pain was a key priority during the drafting and passage of the Arizona Opioid Epidemic Act.

The Act Does NOT Limit Fills for Chronic Pain Sufferers

If an individual is already receiving opioids for the treatment of chronic pain, there will be NO new limitations on the number of days an individual may be prescribed. This bill will not impact them.

The Act Does NOT Limit Dosage for Chronic Pain Sufferers

The Act does not require an individual currently receiving a dose in excess of 90 MME dose to reduce their dose, but health officials recommend you proceed with caution and consider keeping Naloxone on hand in case of an overdose.

There is no requirement that individuals take prescriptions above 90 MME taper down to a lower dose.