

Quick Points



September 6, 2011

Narcotic analgesic and combination pain medication quantity limits

As part of our continued efforts to evaluate and update our formularies, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (Blue Cross) recently reviewed narcotic analgesic and combination pain medications, considering safety and usage details, as well as Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved product labeling.

Based on our analysis, we identified the following trends:

- Thirteen percent of members prescribed these drugs take doses greater than what is recommended according to FDA-approved labeling
- Increased dosing frequency of combination products including acetaminophen may increase the likelihood of exceeding the 4 g maximum total dose of acetaminophen per day

As a result, the following changes will be made effective **October 1, 2011**:

Quantity limits will be placed on narcotic analgesics and combination pain medications for both the GenRx and FlexRx formularies. The PDFs of the formulary on Prime Therapeutics' website **MyPrime**, will be updated October 1, 2011.

Letters to providers and members

At the end of August, providers will receive letters with the names of their patients who have filled prescriptions that exceeded the quantity limit for their medication. The letter will ask the provider to work with the member to reevaluate their medication. Members will also receive letters letting them know that their pain medication prescription exceeds the quantity limits. The letter will ask the member to work with their provider to reevaluate their medication. There will be no one-time exceptions to the quantity limit; however, patients will not be stopped at the point of sale. Pain medication prescriptions will be filled up to the quantity limit, which gives a patient time to talk with their physician and decide on the best course of action.

Quantity Limit form

If a physician, in his or her clinical judgment, believes their patient(s) should continue to receive the original quantity as prescribed, they may submit a Quantity Limit form for consideration. This form is available on **providers.bluecrossmn.com**. Click on "forms & publications" and select "forms: drugs and supplies" from the drop-down box.

If the quantity limit override is approved, the patient will not be able to obtain the "rest of" their original prescription. Blue Cross will adjust the number of days supply to allow for an earlier fill, but regulations prohibit a pharmacist from resubmitting a prescription for a narcotic to allow the fill of the original amount. Therefore, once a quantity limit override is approved, the member will need a new prescription written by his/her provider and take it to the pharmacy to be filled.

Questions?

If you have questions, please contact provider services at **(651) 662-5200** or toll free at **1-800-262-0820**.