

PHARMACY *update*

DECEMBER 2017

GREEN SHIELD CANADA (GSC) CONTINUES TO FINE-TUNE NARCOTICS STRATEGY

Over the past year, GSC has been working to update and strengthen our overall strategy for the management of narcotic pain medications in view of the continuing opioid crisis in Canada and its related societal ramifications. In June 2017, we announced an update to our Narcotic Pain Medication Policy that delists non-abuse-deterrent formulations of opioids when an abuse-deterrent formulation is available.

Effective **January 1, 2018**, we are implementing two additional changes to our policy that further prioritize patient safety.

Here's what's changing...

Determining dosage more accurately

Updated clinical guidelines for the management of chronic pain were recently published by the Michael G. DeGroot National Pain Centre at McMaster University. To better align with the new clinical guidelines, GSC will now determine maximum/threshold dosages for opioid medications based on morphine equivalents. If opioid usage reaches a specified three-month usage threshold established by GSC, we notify the patient via a letter that their prescriber may need to re-evaluate the current treatment and make adjustments if clinically appropriate.

Prior authorization for long-acting narcotics

Since the management of chronic pain generally requires the patient to be stabilized on short-acting narcotic medication before starting treatment with long-acting narcotic medication, long-acting narcotic pain medications will no longer be a general GSC benefit but will need prior authorization. This means that patients must start treatment with a short-acting narcotic **and** demonstrate a need for ongoing pain management before being allowed access to long-acting narcotics.

Patients who have a three-month history of using a short-acting narcotic will be automatically approved for a long-acting narcotic and will not need to go through the prior authorization process. Note that all patients currently taking long-acting narcotics will be grandfathered; this change only affects new narcotic prescriptions. Patients will be required to go through the prior authorization process only where there's no evidence in their claims history of chronic short-acting narcotic use in the previous three months.

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Putting patient safety first

Misuse and abuse of prescription narcotics has become a serious public health and safety issue in Canada. These changes to our narcotics strategy are another way in which GSC is doing our part to ensure patient safety.

GSC CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE 2017 HOLIDAY HOURS

Monday, December 25	CLOSED
Tuesday, December 26	CLOSED
Wednesday, December 27	8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. EST
Thursday, December 28	8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. EST
Friday, December 29	8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. EST
Monday, January 1	CLOSED

Our regular business hours (8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. EST) resume on Tuesday, January 2, 2018.

Best wishes for a healthy and happy 2018.