

CDC Clinical Practice Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Pain, 2022: What It Is vs. What It's Not

The [CDC Clinical Practice Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Pain, 2022](#) (2022 Clinical Practice Guideline) is a **clinical tool intended to help clinicians and patients make shared, informed, patient-centered decisions about pain care**. The recommendations are not intended to be implemented as absolute limits for policy or practice across populations by organizations, healthcare systems, or government entities. This resource is intended to further aid decision-makers in understanding the **intended use** of the 2022 Clinical Practice Guideline and key messages for decision-makers.

What the 2022 Clinical Practice Guideline Is:

- ✓ A clinical tool designed to help primary care clinicians and other clinicians providing pain care to patients aged 18 years or older with acute, subacute, or chronic pain discuss opioid and nonopioid pain management options with patients.
- ✓ Intended to enable flexibility in **clinicians'** practice and decision-making by engaging patients in a process of **person-centered, shared decision-making** which empowers them to review options and select the ones most suitable based on expected health outcomes and well-being.
- ✓ Intended to help clinicians mitigate pain and improve both function and quality of life for patients with pain.

What the 2022 Clinical Practice Guideline Is NOT:

- ✗ Intended to be applied by healthcare professionals, health systems, pharmacies, third-party payers, or governmental jurisdictions as a standard of care across patients or patient populations.
- ✗ A **law, regulation, or policy** that dictates clinical practice (nor should it be cited as the basis for a law, regulation, or policy).
- ✗ A substitute for Food and Drug Administration–approved labeling.
- ✗ A replacement for **clinical judgement or individualized, person-centered care**.
- ✗ Intended to facilitate the rapid tapering or abrupt discontinuation of opioid therapy.
- ✗ Focused on opioids prescribed for opioid use disorder.
- ✗ Applicable to management of pain related to sickle cell disease, cancer-related pain, or palliative care or end-of-life care.

References

Dowell D, Ragan KR, Jones CM, Baldwin GT, Chou R. CDC clinical practice guideline for prescribing opioids for pain — United States, 2022. *MMWR Recommendations and Reports*. (2022). 71(3), 1-95. doi: 10.15585/mmwr.rr7103a1.

Key Definitions

- **Acute Pain:** Pain lasting less than one month.
- **Subacute Pain:** Pain lasting between one and three months.
- **Chronic Pain:** Pain that typically lasts more than three months or past the time of normal healing.
- **Opioid Therapy:** Treatment or intervention that involves the prescription of opioids.
- **Opioid Use Disorder:** A problematic pattern of opioid use that causes significant impairment or distress. A diagnosis is based on specific criteria such as unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control use, or use resulting in social problems and a failure to fulfill obligations at work, school, or home, among other criteria.
- **Person-Centered Care:** Clinicians working collaboratively with patients and healthcare providers to create a care plan that is personalized, comprehensive, and coordinated care that is characterized by dignity, compassion, and respect that leverages patients' strengths to help them achieve an optimal quality of life.
- **Palliative Care:** Specialized medical care for people living with serious illnesses.