

TWIN BRIDGES

Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic

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Understanding Narcotics & Controlled Substances

A Guide for Twin Bridges NP-Led Clinic Patients

Ontarians are among the highest users of prescription drugs containing narcotics of any country around the world, with some forms of narcotic pain killers having increased in use by 900 percent over 20 years. Persons of all ages are struggling with addiction, loss and untimely deaths due to overdose from the unintended use of these medications.

In response the Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care developed the “Ontario’s Narcotic Strategy” in response to the improper use and abuse of narcotic and controlled substance medications. As part of an “Action Plan for Health Care’s” priority of keeping Ontario families healthy, provincially mandated changes came into effect November 1, 2011.

Ontario’s Narcotic Strategy was developed addresses these issues with a multipronged approach:

- Promoting the proper use of prescription narcotics and other controlled substances;
- Working to reduce drug abuse and addiction among Ontarians;
- Ensuring that any person in need of narcotics or controlled substances has appropriate access;
- Implementation of a narcotic monitoring database to track prescriptions and prescribers;
- Partnering with health care sector to educate on appropriate prescribing and dispensing;
- Exploring opportunities to provide additional support for the treatment of addiction.

www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/drugs/ons

What medications does this include?

Narcotics are prescription medications commonly prescribed for moderate to severe pain. Examples are: acetaminophen with codeine (Tylenol 2 or 3), Percocet or Morphine.

Controlled substances are medications, which are listed under Canada’s Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and contains a variety of classes of medication to treat many health conditions.

Examples are: medications for the management of attention deficit disorder (ADD) such as methylphenidate (Ritalin); benzodiazepines which are sedatives and medications used for short-term management of anxiety (clonazepam, lorazepam); and, barbiturates which include a class of medications to manage seizure disorders (phenobarbital). For a complete review of the Act:

<http://www.cno.orghttp://laws-lois.justice.gc/eng/acts/C-38.8/>

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Nurse Practitioners and Narcotic/Controlled Substance Prescribing:

On November 12, 2012, the federal government approved new regulations which will change the and in some cases remove federal restrictions on NP authority to prescribe controlled substances.

Presently, however under the Ontario Nursing Act, 1991 NPs are specifically prohibited from prescribing controlled substances. Therefore it is *illegal* for NPs to prescribe controlled substances.

NPs in Ontario will have legal authority to prescribe controlled substances in the future once the Ontario regulations have taken effect.

What does this mean at Twin Bridges NP-Led Clinic?

The NP providers at Twin Bridges NPLC are very aware of the abuse and misuse of prescription drugs in our province. It is the intent that Twin Bridges NP-Led Clinic will endeavor to provide the best possible care to our population base while ensuring that we do not cause harm and create even greater problems.

What if I am currently taking a narcotic or controlled substance?

It is important to evaluate the reasons why you are taking specific medications and if they are appropriate medications to remain on for long-term use. If you are connected with a local provider that has established these medications it will be in your best interest to remain with that provider should you wish to continue taking the medications.

What happens if I require narcotics or controlled substances after I become a patient of Twin Bridges NP-Led Clinic?

Your NP provider will carefully evaluate your situation to determine the best plan of care and diagnosis with you. If a situation arises that requires treatment with a narcotic or controlled substance, then you must enter into a signed contractual agreement regarding the management of the medications. If you do not abide by the terms of the contract, which is standard for all patients of Twin Bridges NP-Led Clinic, you will be dismissed as a patient from the clinic's care.