

Health PEI

SAFER PRACTICE NOTICE

Opioid Formulations

July 2026

Issue:

Confusion with opioid formulations is one of the classes of medications **most** frequently involved in **medication incidents** across Health PEI.

Opioids are not all the same – differences in formulations, onset and duration can significantly impact patient safety. Being able to distinguish between short-acting and long-acting opioids help guide appropriate selection, dosing and monitoring.

How to distinguish between short-acting and long-acting opioids:



- IMMEDIATE RELEASE (IR)** medications work quickly, or fast
These are used to treat acute or breakthrough pain.
- LONG-ACTING** medications have a prolonged duration, and are frequently labelled with **SR, ER, XR, CR, or Contin**
 - Generally, only taken once or twice a day
 - Slower to release and provide steady dosing
 - Typically used for chronic pain

Common Brand Names and their Formulations

DRUG NAME	IMMEDIATE RELEASE FORMULATION	LONG-ACTING FORMULATION
Codeine	Codeine Phosphate®	Codeine Contin®
	Tylenol® (Lenoltec®) 1, 2, & 3	
HYDROmorphone	Dilaudid® (HYDROmorphone)	HYDROmorph Contin
Morphine	Statex®	MS Contin®
	MS-IR®	Kadian®
		M-Eslon®
Oxycodone	Acet/Oxycodone	Oxy-Neo®
	Oxy-IR®	
	Supeudol®	
Tapentadol	Nucynta IR®	Nucynta ER®
Tramadol	Acet/Tramadol	Durela®
		Zytram XL®
	Tramadol	Tridural®
		Ralivia®

Look closely when administering opioids to ensure it is the proper formulation

ASK

If you are uncertain that you’re choosing the right medication, take a second look and ask for help

LEARN

For more information on opioid safety, please review [Health PEI SRC: Opioid Safety](#)

For more information on this Safer Practice Notice, please contact:

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Safer Practice Notices are issued by the Health PEI Quality and Patient Safety Division to communicate recommended changes as a result of events that have been reported and investigated through the Provincial Safety Management System (PSMS).

Safer Practice Notices can be found at: <https://src.healthpei.ca/safer-practice-notice>