Health PEI

SAFER PRACTICE NOTICE

Opioid Medication Incidents
July 2026

Issue:

Opioids are one of the classes of medications **most** frequently involved in **medication incidents** across Health PEI. Data from the Provincial Safety Management System (PSMS) identified **there is confusion** with Morphine and HYDROmorphone in opioid-related incidents:

Morphine **AND** **HYDROmorphone**

Processes That Reduce Opioid Patient Safety Incidents:

Medication incidents are preventable adverse events that can occur during prescribing, order entry, dispensing, or administration due to multiple contributing factors. By following appropriate medication administration standards and policies, you can error-proof and safety-proof your medication administration.

Error-Proofing Strategies

- ✓ **Perform Three (3) Checks Prior to Administration**
  - Ensure the **correct medication** is removed from the cabinet, drawer, or refrigerator
  - Perform **a side-by-side check** of the medication with the order and/or MAR, to verify the correct drug and dose
  - **Verify medication ordered** and **client identification** after preparation, just before administration
- ✓ Follow the ***Rights of Medication Administration***
  - If taking an order, ensure you **confirm the: drug, dose, route, frequency and person** (read-back method)
- ✓ Verify that you have the correct person by performing a client ID using **2-client identifiers**
- ✓ **Minimize interruptions** when preparing the opioid
- ✓ **When in doubt, ASK!**

Safety-Proofing Strategies

- ✓ Recognize and **utilize TALLman lettering** on MARs and labels
- ✓ Where possible, **use brand-name equivalent** for HYDROmorphone (Dilaudid) to differentiate from morphine
- ✓ **Separate** HYDROmorphone and morphine in storage areas
- ✓ **Ensure accessibility to naloxone kit –** and staff are familiar with its use and location
- ✓ **Be familiar** with the differences in formulations
- ✓ Override on opioids? STOP and reassess
- ✓ Review the opioid safety resources on the Health PEI Staff Resource Centre: Opioid Safety
- ✓ **Understand opioid comparisons** (e.g. HYDROmorphone is 5x more potent than morphine!)
- ✓ **Clarify** if the dose seems unusual
- ✓ If you make an error, **remember to report medication incidents in PSMS a**nd document in the client's health record

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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-notices