



May 16, 2017

Dear Health Care Provider:

Over the last three years, the opioid and heroin epidemic has worsened in Anne Arundel County. In 2015, we were experiencing an overdose a day and a fatality a week. In 2016, our fatalities more than doubled, and our overdoses nearly tripled. Anne Arundel County has been harder hit than almost any other jurisdiction in Maryland. Our County has the third-highest incidence of opiate-related overdose deaths in the State. In addition, overdoses are driving an ever-higher proportion of local emergency department activity.

The County has coordinated efforts among the Departments of Health, Police, Fire/EMS, and Social Services; the school system; and other agencies because we all need to work together to find solutions to this national epidemic.

We are also counting on you as a prescriber to be part of the solution for your patients. Most of our constituents with substance-use disorders began their path to addiction after forming dependencies to opioids prescribed as a result of an injury or other medical issue. Their opioid dependence may have led to obtaining illegal street opioids like heroin, sometimes laced with fentanyl, after valid prescriptions ran out.

To help address this issue, we are asking that every health care provider in our County practice extreme caution when prescribing these medications to your patients. Please consider non-pharmaceutical therapies and non-opioid medications for the treatment of pain. Where opioids are appropriate, please prescribe the minimum amount necessary for the pain. Closely monitor your patients' response to the medication, while continuing to caution them about the dangers of these addictive drugs. As part of your pain management plan, please include conditions for discontinuing the use of opioids.

To assist in your efforts, the Department of Health has the latest information on aaphysicians.org about the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidelines on pain management, the Maryland Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, local prescription drug drop off locations, and patient handouts. The "Did You Know?" flier for patients is enclosed. If you would like additional copies, please call Prevention Specialist Caitlin Hall at 410-222-6724.

Should you need any additional information about Anne Arundel County's opioid and heroin addiction prevention efforts or assistance in accessing treatment services for your patients, please call the Department of Health at 410-222-0117.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steven R. Schuh", written over a horizontal line.

Steven R. Schuh
County Executive

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jinlene Chan MD", written over a horizontal line.

Jinlene Chan, M.D., M.P.H.
Health Officer

DID YOU KNOW...?

Misuse of prescription opioids can lead to addiction and can cause unintentional overdose or death.

What are opioids?

Opioids are natural or synthetic chemicals that reduce feelings of pain. These medications, when taken as prescribed, can be part of a safe and effective treatment plan.

Opioids include prescription drugs such as hydrocodone (Vicodin®) and oxycodone (OxyContin®, Percocet®). Heroin is an illegal opioid.

What are the risks?

- **Tolerance.** You must take more of a drug to achieve the same effect.
- **Physical Dependence.** Your body adapts to a drug. When you stop taking the drug, you experience withdrawal symptoms.
- **Addiction.** You are unable to stop using a drug despite negative health and social consequences.
- **Overdose and Death.** An opioid overdose causes breathing to slow to a dangerous rate and can lead to death.

I'm in pain—what should I do?

Talk to your health care provider and develop a plan to manage your pain. Ask about the potential risks of prescription opioids and ways to manage your pain without opioids. If opioids are used, include criteria for stopping or continuing medication in your plan.

Who do I call if I or loved ones need help?

Anne Arundel County Substance Abuse Treatment Referral and Resource Line:
410-222-0117 DENIALisDEADLY.org

Anne Arundel County Crisis Warmline:
410-768-5522

SAMHSA's 24-Hour National Help Line:
1-800-662-HELP (4357)

OXY TODAY.

HEROIN TOMORROW?

DENIAL IS DEADLY.

DENIALisDEADLY.org

410-222-0117



Prescription Opioid Safety Checklist

- Talk to your health care provider about the potential risks of taking prescription opioids, including addiction and overdose.
- Take medication as directed. Do not take more than prescribed.
- Do not mix prescription opioids with other prescription drugs, unless specified by your health care provider.
- Do not use in combination with alcohol—alcohol is a depressant and can increase your risk of accidental overdose.
- Never share prescription drugs.

Help prevent misuse and abuse—Mind Your MEDS.

Monitor all prescription and over-the-counter drugs in your household.

Ensure that your children and loved ones understand the dangers of using and abusing drugs.

Dispose of expired, unwanted and unused medicine safely. Use the prescription drug drop-off places listed below.

Secure and seal your medicine to avoid misuse.

Anne Arundel County Free Year-Round Prescription Medication Disposal Program

Drop off your expired or unused medications safely at these locations 24 hours daily, 7 days a week:

Anne Arundel County Police Department

Northern District

939 Hammonds Lane
Baltimore, MD 21225
410-222-6135

Southern District

35 Stepneys Lane
Edgewater, MD 21037
410-222-1961

Eastern District

204 Pasadena Road
Pasadena, MD 21122
410-222-6145

Western District

8273 Telegraph Road
Odenton, MD 21113
410-222-6155

Annapolis Police Department

199 Taylor Avenue
Annapolis, MD 21401
410-268-9000

Maryland State Police

6800 Aviation Boulevard
Glen Burnie, MD 21061
410-761-5130

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.:

Anne Arundel County Police Department

8495 Veterans Highway
Millersville, MD 21108
410-222-8050

