



## Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH  
Commissioner

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Dear Health Care Professional:

Opioid analgesic misuse and overdose is a deadly epidemic that disproportionately harms Bronx residents. In 2013, when opioid analgesic overdose death occurred every other day in New York City, Bronx residents had the second highest death rate among the five boroughs after Staten Island.

As a health care provider, you are on the front lines of this epidemic and can help prevent additional deaths. Most opioid analgesics that are misused or result in an overdose likely originate from a prescription written by a provider seeking to alleviate pain. Safe and judicious prescribing practices can protect your patients and reduce the potential for misuse by others. Small changes in your practice can make a powerful impact on the health of your patients and the Bronx community:

- Prescribe non-opioid pain relievers (e.g., acetaminophen, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) for most cases of acute pain. When prescribing opioid analgesics for severe acute pain, prescribe only short-acting agents. (A three-day supply is usually sufficient).
- Avoid prescribing opioid analgesics to patients taking benzodiazepines to limit the risk of fatal respiratory depression.
- Calculate the total daily morphine milligram equivalents (MME) when prescribing opioid analgesics. Dosages of  $\geq 100$  MME should be a threshold for caution and thorough patient reassessment. (OpioidCalc, an MME calculator, can be found at [nyc.gov/html/doh/html/hcp/drug-rx.shtml](http://nyc.gov/html/doh/html/hcp/drug-rx.shtml))

This **Opioid Analgesics Action Kit** includes clinical tools and resources for your practice and educational materials for your patients. For more information about opioid analgesics in New York City visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health) and search for “opioids.”

Thank you for your dedication to the health of Bronx residents, and for your partnership in reversing this epidemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary T. Bassett".

Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH  
Commissioner