

PRESCRIBING POLICIES:

**4.11.1 METHADONE and BUPRENORPHINE/NALOXONE (SUBOXONE)  
CONTROL PROGRAM – DAY/WEEKEND PASS MEDICATIONS (VGH)**

POLICY

- 1. For pain management (methadone only):**
  - a. VGH pharmacy will supply pass medication provided.
  - b. For patients on methadone prior to admission, the pass medication order can be written by any prescriber.
  - c. For patients with methadone initiated during the current hospital admission (i.e. *de novo* therapy), only prescribers with a full methadone exemption may order the pass medication.
  - d. A 24-hour notice is required for processing the pass medication.
- 2. For addiction management:**
  - a. methadone**
    - i. VGH pharmacy will **NOT** provide pass medication for addiction therapy as daily witnessed ingestion is required.
    - ii. Only prescribers with full methadone prescribing privileges for addiction therapy may write order on an outpatient triplicate prescription and arrange to have patient fill the medication from a community pharmacy on a daily basis for duration of the pass.
  - b. buprenorphine/naloxone (SUBOXONE)**
    - i. Pass medications may be provided at the discretion of any physician
    - ii. A 24-hour notice is required for processing the pass medication.

PROCEDURES (FOR PAIN MANAGEMENT ONLY)

Physician: 1. Write order for the methadone pass at least 24 hours prior to the pass.

Nurse: **FOR ALL WARDS:**  
1. Send a copy of physician's order to Pharmacy indicating the time the patient is leaving on pass. Ensure that the number of doses required is indicated.

Pharmacist: 1. Process the prescription on the computer system as a specific order for duration of the pass. Ensure the dosing instructions and brand name or manufacturer appears on the label. (See PCIS manual.)

2. For outpatient pain management, methadone oral solution does not need to be diluted in Tang. Ensure that the strength of the solution and volume of drug per dose is clearly labeled.