Guidelines for Administering Opioids Safely

The National Patient Safety Agency recognised that unfamiliarity with opioid analgesics can lead to serious prescribing and administration errors. The flowchart below defines the steps to be taken when administering opioid analgesics. **The key points to minimising the risks are:** familiarity with the therapeutic characteristics of the opioid, confirmation of any previous formulation and dose if previously prescribed and the starting dose if newly prescribed. See also the Safe Prescribing and Administration of Opioid Analgesics poster on the Trust website.

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Opioid to be administered

Is the administering clinician familiar with the therapeutic characteristics of the opioid?

- **No**
  - Clinician to familiarise themself with the therapeutic characteristics of the opioid to be prescribed, or seek appropriate advice.

- **Yes**
  - Is this the first dose of opioid ever prescribed for this patient or an opioid is being prescribed after a break in opioid treatment?
    - **No**
      - Double check the current medicine, dose and formulation against the drug chart with the second person checking the CD administration. If possible check with the patient that they are expecting the medicine being administered.
    - **Yes**
      - Is the prescribed dose the usual starting dose for the drug and route to be used?
        - **No**
          - Contact prescriber
        - **Yes**
          - Administer if safe to do so or contact the prescriber if any concerns.