



# Opioid Adverse Drug Events (ADEs)

## DEFINITIONS:

**CDC:** An adverse drug event (ADE) is when someone is harmed by a medicine.<sup>1</sup>

**CMS:** An injury resulting from drug-related medical interventions.<sup>2</sup>

## QUICK FACT ABOUT ADES:

- It is generally estimated that about half of ADEs are preventable.<sup>3</sup>
- Antidiabetic meds, anticoagulants/antiplatelet meds and opioids account for more than 50% of Medicare patient Emergency Department (ED) visits.<sup>3</sup>
- Each year, ADEs account for nearly 700,000 ED visits and 100,000 hospitalizations.<sup>3</sup>

## COMMON EFFECTS OF OPIOID ADEs<sup>2</sup>:



**Hallucinations  
or delusions**



**Confusion  
or dizziness**



**Falls**



**Lethargy/  
somnolence or  
unresponsiveness**



**Decreased  
respiration  
or decreased  
blood pressure/  
heart rate**



**Constipation,  
abdominal pain  
or inability  
to urinate**

## OCCURRENCES THAT COULD POINT TO AN OPIOID ADE<sup>2</sup>:

- Administration of naloxone
- Transfer to hospital
- Contact physician due to onset of new symptoms
- Use of a benzodiazepine
- Order for an abdominal x-ray
- Addition of a laxative or stool softener
- Loss of coordination
- Addition of a new medication
- Removal of a medication

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/medicationsafety/adult\\_adversedrugs.html](https://www.cdc.gov/medicationsafety/adult_adversedrugs.html)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/QAPI/Downloads/Adverse-Drug-Event-Trigger-Tool.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://psnet.ahrq.gov/primer/medication-errors-and-adverse-drug-events>