

Red and Yellow Flag Behaviors for Substance Use Disorders

Red

- Deterioration in functioning at work or socially
- Illegal activities—selling medications, forging prescriptions, or buying medications from nonmedical sources
- Using medications in ways other than prescribed (e.g., injecting or snorting medication)
- Multiple reports of lost or stolen prescriptions
- Resistance to change in medications despite adverse effects
- Refusal to comply with random drug screens, call backs, or pill counts
- Concurrent abuse of alcohol or drugs
- Use of multiple physicians and pharmacies

Yellow (could be normal but combined may be of concern)

- Complaints about need for more medication
- Drug hoarding
- Nonadherence to recommendations for non-medication pain therapies
- Acquiring similar medications from other providers
- Occasional unsanctioned dose escalation
- Requesting specific pain medications
- Taken in the context of a patient's presentation and history, this could be a sign of "seeking" certain medications, or if patients ask for specific medications it could be because this has worked in the past. (consider a patient asking for a specific blood pressure medicine that has worked well in the past, providers would likely restart it immediately)