

# Provider Update

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## Tramadol: Drug safety communication

**Summary:** This notification from the State of Tennessee, Bureau of TennCare, is to inform you of the FDA's investigation into whether the painkiller tramadol causes breathing problems when used off-label in pediatric patients.

✦ **What this means to you:** Recently, a five-year-old in France took one dose of tramadol oral solution after a surgery to remove his tonsils and adenoids. The child experienced severely slowed and difficult breathing that required hospitalization. The child was an ultra-rapid metabolizer of tramadol, which means he had a genetic variation that enabled tramadol to be converted into the active form of the opioid more quickly and completely than in other patients.

The FDA states the risk may be increased when giving the medication following a tonsillectomy or adenoidectomy. The State is asking healthcare providers to consider prescribing non-tramadol pain relievers for children while it completes its investigation.<sup>1</sup>

### **What if I need assistance?**

If you have questions about this communication or received this fax in error, contact your local Provider Relations representative or call Provider Services toll free at 1-800-454-3730.

<sup>1</sup> Young, K, FDA Examining Tramadol Use in Children, NEJM Journal Watch, September 22, 2015.

