

## Behaviors of Concern

“Aberrant” behaviors are not equivalent to addiction. There has been little research on the meaning of these behaviors and their predictive role has not been established. They can be indicative of other conditions, such as unrelieved pain or encephalopathy and confusion, or family or other social-emotional problems. They may also be common but difficult behaviors for various personality disorders. The appearance of “aberrant” behaviors is an indication of a need for reassessment and a differential diagnosis. Behaviors that raise concern about opioid use range from relatively innocuous and ambiguous to very serious. Both the number and severity of concerning behaviors should be considered in assessment and decision-making, but no list of “aberrant” behaviors has been validated to diagnose or predict abuse/addiction. Assessment should also determine if what is being observed is a series of anecdotal reports or a pattern of behavior. Terms such as “aberrant” and “drug-seeking” should not be applied to a particular patient, and should not be used as a pretext for discharging a patient.

(Adapted from McCaffery M, Grimm MA, Pasero C, Ferrell B, Uman GC. On the Meaning of "Drug Seeking". *Pain Management.Nursing*. 2005 Dec;6(4):122-136.)

The list below has been collected from a variety of sources, none of which contain all of the listed behaviors

Unilateral escalation of opioid dose	Drug hoarding during periods of reduced symptoms
Use of opioids to treat anxiety, stress, depression	Requesting specific drugs
Lost or stolen prescriptions	Openly acquiring similar drugs from other medical sources
Getting prescriptions from multiple providers (“doctor shopping,” ED visits)	Using the drug to treat another symptom without medical consultation
Getting prescription drugs from non-medical providers	Reporting unexpected psychic effects
Forging a prescription	
Injecting or inhaling oral formulation	
Criminal diversion	
Stealing/borrowing drugs from others	
Concurrently abusing alcohol or illicit drugs	
Nonadherence to treatment plan	
Decreasing social/family functioning, deteriorating work performance	
Resisting change in therapy despite evidence of lack of effectiveness and/or adverse effects	
Aggressive complaining about the need for more drug	