



## Medication Adherence

Pharmacy Quality Alliance-endorsed performance measures

### Measure description

Percentage of patients with a prescription for diabetes, hypertension or cholesterol medications and who were adherent with their prescribed course of treatment.

The three measures are:

- Medication Adherence for Diabetes Medications
- Medication Adherence for Hypertension (RAS Antagonists)
- Medication Adherence for Cholesterol (Statins)

### Measure population (denominator)

Patients 18 years and older who were dispensed at least two prescriptions on different dates of service during the measurement year.

### Did you know?

- Medication adherence can reduce total annual health care spending primarily through decreased inpatient hospital days and emergency department visits.
- Medications are arguably the single most important health care intervention to prevent illness, disability and death in the older population.
- The consequences of medication nonadherence in older adults may be more serious, less easily detected and less easily resolved than in younger age groups.

### Medications included in each measure

| Diabetes  | Hypertension   | Cholesterol |
|---|--|-------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biguanides</li> <li>• Sulfonylureas</li> <li>• Thiazolidinediones</li> <li>• Dipeptidyl peptidase (DPP)-IV inhibitors</li> <li>• Incretin mimetics</li> <li>• Meglitinides</li> <li>• Sodium glucose cotransporter 2 (SGLT2) inhibitors</li> </ul> | Renin-angiotensin system (RAS) antagonists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors</li> <li>• Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs)</li> <li>• Direct renin inhibitors</li> </ul> | Statins     |

*continued*

## Measure compliance (numerator)

Patients who filled their prescribed medication often enough to cover 80% or more of the treatment period.

**Note:** Patients must use their Medicare Part D pharmacy benefit as gap closure is dependent on pharmacy claims.

## Exclusions

- Received hospice services anytime during the measurement year
- Patients with end stage renal disease diagnosis
- Diabetes measure only: prescription for insulin
- Hypertension measure only: prescription for sacubitril/valsartan

## Helpful hints

- Instruct patients to fill prescriptions using their pharmacy benefit.
  - Claims filled through pharmacy discount programs, cash claims and medication samples will not count.
  - Gap closure is dependent on pharmacy claims.
  - Medication costs are often less when they use their pharmacy benefit.
  - Consider adding directives to prescriptions instructing the pharmacy to run it through the patients Medicare Part D pharmacy benefit, especially when utilizing discount programs.
- Provide short and clear instructions for all prescriptions.
- Emphasize the benefits of taking the medication and the risks of not taking the medication. The benefits should outweigh the risks.
- At each visit, ask your patients about their medication habits:
  - What side effects have you had from the medication, if any?
  - How many doses have you forgotten to take?
  - What financial barriers prevent you from obtaining your prescriptions?
  - What issues prevent you from refilling your prescription?
- Offer recommendations for adherence improvement:
  - Suggest the use of weekly or monthly pillboxes, smart phone apps with medication reminder alerts and placing medications in a visible area (in properly closed containers and safely out of reach of children or pets).
  - Instruct patients to contact their practitioner if experiencing side effects. Discuss alternative medications when appropriate.
  - Encourage patients to enroll in auto-refill program or utilize mail-order options.
- Once patients are stable on regimen, write 90-day supplies of maintenance medications.
- Schedule a follow-up visit within 30 days when prescribing a new medication to assess effectiveness and any barriers.

## Resources

1. Pharmacy Quality Alliance (PQA). 2022. "Proportion of Days Covered: Diabetes All Class." [pqaalliance.org/measures-overview#pdc-dr](https://pqaalliance.org/measures-overview#pdc-dr)
2. Adult Medication. 2012. "Improving Medication Adherence in Older Adults." [adultmedication.com](https://adultmedication.com)
3. National Library of Medicine. 2021. "A study of medication compliance in geriatric patients with chronic illness." [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8144798/](https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8144798/)

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