

2023 HEDIS Measure Tips



One in a series of tip sheets that look at key Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set measures, commonly referred to as HEDIS® measures.

Use of Imaging Studies for Low Back Pain (LBP)

Effectiveness of Care HEDIS® Measure*

Measure description

The percentage of patients with a primary diagnosis of low back pain who did **not** have an imaging study (e.g., standard X-ray, MRI, CT scan) within 28 days of the diagnosis.

Measure population (denominator)

Patients 18 to 75 years of age as of December 31 of the measurement year who had a primary diagnosis of low back pain from January 1 to December 3 of the measurement year.

Measure compliance (numerator)

The number of patients with a primary diagnosis of low back pain who did **not** have an imaging study within 28 days following the diagnosis (such as a plain X-ray, MRI or CT scan).

Note: This measure is reported as an inverted rate. A higher score indicates appropriate treatment of low back pain (e.g., the percentage for whom imaging studies did not occur).

Did you know?

- In a three-month period, more than one-fourth of U.S. adults experience at least one day of back pain.
- Imaging studies rarely improve outcomes but do increase cost and radiation exposure.

This measure applies to both commercial and Medicare members.

continued

Exclusions

Condition and/or treatment	Time frame (through 28 days after diagnosis)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cancer • HIV • Major organ transplant 	History
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Osteoporosis Medication(s) • Lumbar surgery • Spondylopathy 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent trauma 	Prior 3 months (90 days)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low back pain diagnosis 	Prior 6 months (180 days)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neurologic impairment • Spinal infection 	Prior 12 months (1 year)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intravenous drug abuse 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolonged use of corticosteroids (defined as 90 consecutive days) 	Prior 12 months (1 year) <i>Does not include 28 days after</i>
Additional Exclusions	Time frame
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received hospice services • Received palliative care 	During the measurement year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deceased patients 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are 66 years of age and older with advanced illness and frailty 	See <i>Advanced Illness and Frailty Guide</i> for details

Helpful HEDIS hints

- Acute low back pain can be managed by:
 - Staying active
 - Education on injury prevention
 - Safe back exercises
 - Use of over-the-counter pain relievers
- Avoid ordering diagnostic studies in the first 4 weeks of new-onset back pain unless certain conditions are present.
 - Severe or progressive neurologic deficits (e.g., bowel or bladder dysfunction, saddle paresthesia)
 - Fever
 - Sudden back pain with spinal tenderness (especially with a history of osteoporosis, cancer or steroid use)
 - Trauma
 - Serious underlying medical condition (e.g., cancer)
- If ordering an imaging study and an exclusion applies, be sure to code the exclusion in addition to the diagnosis of low back pain.

Resources

1. National Institutes of Health (NIH): MedlinePlus. 2021. "Why does your back hurt?" magazine.medlineplus.gov/pdf/NIHMLPWinter21.pdf#page=8

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