

To find the category (Medicare Stars, Federal Employee Program®, etc.) this measure applies to, see our [chart of HEDIS® measures](#).

Use of Imaging Studies for Low Back Pain (LBP)

The Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS®) from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) standardizes and measures quality for all patients. HEDIS is one tool we use to measure many aspects of performance. The LBP measure looks at using imaging studies for **uncomplicated lower back pain**. It's used to evaluate the appropriate use of all diagnostic imaging studies, including x-rays, for uncomplicated new onset lower back pain.

What is the measure?

The measure assesses members age 18 to 50 who have a primary diagnosis of uncomplicated low back pain in any of the following settings:

- Office visits, outpatient evaluations, telemedicine/telehealth visits, emergency department visits and observation level of care
- Physical therapy and/or osteopathic and/or chiropractic manipulative treatment

We recognize that providers know that even the simplest complaints of low back pain are never just “simple visits for low back pain”. Realizing that each patient is unique, and imaging may be required, NCQA has added a vast number of medical conditions where imaging could be medically necessary.

By simply providing the additional diagnosis in your medical evaluation, your patient with low back pain is excluded from your HEDIS metric; and therefore, does not negatively affect your performance for NCQA.

Exclusion Coding

Use this helpful chart during your low back pain patient visits for fast access to HEDIS exclusion coding information.

DESCRIPTION	ICD-10 CODE
Cancer (active)	ICD10 “C” codes for active cancer apply.
Cancer (personal history)	ICD10 “Z” codes for personal history of cancer apply.
HIV	B20; Z21
IV drug abuse	ICD10 “F” codes for IV drug abuse apply.
Kidney transplant	0TY00Z0-0TY00Z2; 0TY10Z0-0TY10Z2
Major organ transplant, other than kidney	Heart, small intestine, large intestine, liver, pancreas islets, ovaries, face, head, thymus, spleen, lungs, esophagus, stomach
Neurologic impairment	G83.4
Spinal infection, osteomyelitis and discitis	A17.81, G06.1, M46.25-M46.28, M46.35-M46.38, M46.46-M46.48
Trauma/Fractures (trauma within 90 days)	G89.11, ICD10 “S” codes for trauma/fractures apply. <i>This includes ICD for sprain and strain of lower back.</i>
Prolonged use of corticosteroids (90 consecutive days of treatment)	Hydrocortisone, cortisone, prednisone, prednisolone, methylprednisolone, triamcinolone, dexamethasone, betamethasone
Hospice care	Members in hospice are excluded from the eligible population.

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HEDIS Measure: Low Back Pain (continued)

How to Improve Your Score

- Avoid ordering diagnostic studies in the first four weeks of new-onset back pain in the absence of red flags
- Use of complete and accurate Value Set
- Use of correct exclusion codes where necessary
- Timely submission of claims and encounter data
- Be aware of exclusions listed above

Recommended Routine Treatment

- Diagnostic imaging should be ordered only when necessary because of the high incidence of radiologic abnormalities in asymptomatic persons.
- Physical therapy, including massage, stretching, strengthening exercises and manipulation.
- First-line drug therapy with acetaminophen, a cyclo-oxygenase-2 inhibitor or a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug is recommended
- Steroidal drugs (reduce inflammation)
- Short-term use of muscle relaxants may be considered, but they can be sedating. Patients should stay as active as possible.
- Comorbid conditions such as sleep disorders, anxiety, or depression should be treated, and psychosocial issues should be addressed.
- Adjuvant antidepressants and anticonvulsants should be considered.

Uncomplicated Low Back Pain Diagnosis Codes (*not all inclusive*)

Description	ICD-10-CM Diagnosis
Lumbago	M54.40-M54.42
Sciatica, right side, left side	M54.31-M54.32
Dorsalgia, unspecified	M54.9
Low back pain	M54.5
Other spondylosis with radiculopathy, lumbar/ lumbar sacral, sacral, sacrococcygeal region	M47.26 - M47.28
Spondylosis without myelopathy or radiculopathy, lumbar, lumbosacral, sacral, sacrococcygeal region	M47.816 - M47.818
Spinal stenosis, lumbar, lumbosacral, lumbosacral, sacral, sacrococcygeal region	M48.06 – M48.08

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HEDIS Measure: Low Back Pain (continued)

Uncomplicated Low Back Pain Diagnosis Codes (*not all inclusive*) (continued)

Description (continued from previous page)	ICD-10-CM Diagnosis
Other intervertebral disc displacement, lumbar lumbosacral region	M51.26 – M51.27
Sciatica, unspecified, right side, left side	M54.30 – M54.32
Intervertebral disc disorders with radiculopathy, lumbar region, lumbosacral region	M51.16-M51.17
Intervertebral disc displacement, lumbar region, lumbosacral region	M51.26-M51.27
Other intervertebral disc degeneration, lumbar region, lumbosacral region	M51.36-M51.37
Other intervertebral disc disorders, lumbar region, lumbosacral region	M51.86-M51.87
Intervertebral disc stenosis of neural canal of lumbar region	M99.53
Subluxation of unspecified lumbar vertebra; initial, subsequent, sequela encounter	S33.100A, S33.100D, S33.100S
Sprain of ligaments of lumbar spine; initial encounter	S33.5XXA
Sprain of sacroiliac joint; initial encounter	S33.6XXA
Sprain of other parts of lumbar spine and pelvis; initial encounter	S33.8XXA
Sprain of unspecified parts of lumbar spine and pelvis; initial encounter	S33.9XXA
Unspecified injury of muscle, fascia and tendon of lower back; initial, subsequent, sequela encounter	S39.002A, S39.002D, S39.002S
Other specified injuries of lower back; initial, subsequent, sequela encounter	S39.82XA, S39.82XD, S39.82XS

Resources

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