

Use of Imaging Studies for Lower Back Pain

The Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS^{®1}) 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. One of these measures 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.

How does this measure work?

- Includes patients age 18 to 50
- Principal diagnosis of low back pain, use ICD-10 codes: M47.26-M54.9, M99 and S33.100A-S39.92XD
- 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.

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)	ICD-10 “C” codes for active cancer apply.
Cancer (personal history)	ICD-10 “Z” codes for personal history of cancer apply.
HIV	B20; Z21
IV drug abuse	ICD-10 “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, ICD-10 “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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