

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

## Use of Imaging Studies for Low Back Pain (LBP)

By working together, we can improve health outcomes for your patients, our members. The Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS®<sup>1</sup>) helps us measure many aspects of performance. This tip sheet provides key details of the HEDIS measure for use of imaging studies for low back pain.

### What is the measure?

The measure assesses members age 18-75 who have a primary diagnosis (**first diagnosis on a claim**) of *uncomplicated low back pain* in any of the settings listed below **and** who did **not** have an imaging study (plain X-ray, MRI, CT scan) within 28 days of the diagnosis:

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

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

By adding the exclusion diagnosis codes to the claim, your patient with low back pain is excluded from the HEDIS metric and does **not** negatively impact your performance for NCQA.

### How to Improve Your Score

- If not medically required, avoid ordering imaging studies (X-rays, CT, MRI) in the first four weeks of onset of uncomplicated low back pain
- Use appropriate exclusion codes where necessary
- Timely submission of claims and encounter data

### Recommended Routine Treatment

- Diagnostic imaging should be ordered when necessary due to the high incidence of incidental findings on imaging in asymptomatic patients
- Physical therapy, including massage, stretching, strengthening exercises and manipulation
- First-line drug therapy with acetaminophen, a cyclo-oxygenase-2 inhibitors or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs is recommended
- Steroidal drugs for inflammation reduction
- Short-term use of muscle relaxants may be considered, if medically necessary. 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. Consider a referral to a Behavioral Health specialist or therapist when medically beneficial
- Adjuvant therapy with antidepressant and anticonvulsant should be considered when medically beneficial

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## HEDIS Measure: Low Back Pain (LBP) (continued)

### Exclusion Codes (including but not limited to)

Description	ICD-10 Code
Acute pain due to trauma	G89.11
Trauma/fractures (trauma within 90 days)	ICD-10 "S" codes for trauma/fractures
Cancer (active)	ICD-10 "C" codes
Cancer (personal history)	ICD-10 "Z" codes
HIV	B20; Z21
IV drug abuse	ICD-10 "F" codes apply
Kidney transplant	0TY00Z0-0TY00Z2; 0TY10Z0-0TY10Z2
Major organ transplant, other than kidney	Heart, small intestine, large intestine, liver, pancreas islets, hand, uterus, ovaries, face, thymus, spleen, lungs, esophagus, stomach
Neurologic impairment	G83.4, K59.2, M48.062, R26.2, R29.2
Spinal infection, osteomyelitis and discitis	A17.81, G06.1, M46.25-M46.28, M46.35-M46.38, M46.46-M46.48
Prolonged use of corticosteroids (90 consecutive days of treatment)	Hydrocortisone, cortisone, prednisone, prednisolone, methylprednisolone, triamcinolone, dexamethasone, betamethasone
Osteoporosis (anytime during member's history)	Medication: denosumab (J0897), ibandronate sodium (J170), teriparatide (J3110), romosozumab (J3111), zoledronic acid (J3489), alendronate, alendronate-cholecalciferol, risedronate, abaloparatide, raloxifene
Lumbar surgery (anytime during member's history)	S2348, S2350, repair, release, destruction, division, drainage, reposition, excision, extirpation of matter-Lumbar Spinal Cord and Lumbar vertebra. Lumbar fusion and insertion of internal and external fixation devices.
Spondylopathy (anytime during member's history)	M45.0, M45.3-M45.9, M48.10, M48.13-M48.19
Fragility fractures (within 90 days)	Fatigue fractures of vertebra, age-related osteoporosis, stress fractures-hip, periprosthetic fracture around internal prosthetic-hip joint, osteoporosis with pathological fracture of vertebra
Hospice care (in hospice or using Hospice services)	HCPCS: G0182, G9473-G9479, Q5003-Q5008, Q5010, S9126, T2046, CPT: 99377, 99378
Palliative care (during measurement Year)	HCPCS: G9054, M1017, ICD-10: Z51.5
Members age 66 and older as of December 31 of the measurement year, with frailty and advanced illness; members must meet <b>both</b> frailty and advanced illness criteria to be excluded	

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## HEDIS Measure: Low Back Pain (LBP) *(continued)*

### Uncomplicated Low Back Pain Diagnosis Codes (including but not limited to)

Below are some more common ICD-10 diagnosis codes, when used as the first diagnosis on a claim, triggers the LBP HEDIS care gap.

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,	M48.061, M48.07-M48.08
Other intervertebral disc displacement, lumbar	M51.26 – M51.27
Sciatica, unspecified, right side, left side	M54.30 – M54.32
Intervertebral disc disorders with radiculopathy, lumbar region, lumbosacral 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

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## HEDIS Measure: Low Back Pain (LBP) *(continued)*

### Resources

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Berry, Jennifer (2018). Home remedies for fast back pain relief. Retrieved August 16, 2019, from [medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322582.php](https://medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322582.php)

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