Trillium HEALTH RESOURCES

HEDIS Provider Tip Sheet

Use of Imaging Studies for Low Back Pain (LBP)

LBP Measure Description[1]

Assesses adults 18–75 years of age with a principal diagnosis of low back pain who did not have an imaging study (plain X-ray, MRI, CT scan) within 28 days of diagnosis (a higher score indicates better performance).

Why is LBP Important?[1]

About 2.63 million ER visits in the U.S. each year are for low back pain-related disorders. 75%–85% of Americans will have low back pain at some time in their lives. In any 3-month period, about 25% of Americans will face at least 1 day of back pain. Evidence shows that when there is no "red flag" (e.g., a broken bone, a serious disease), routine imaging (X-ray, MRI, CT scan) for low back pain does not always improve outcomes and could expose an individual to unneeded harms like radiation, and possibly to unnecessary treatment. It is critical to reduce imaging when there are no red flags so treatments that are not effective, and that may result in extra costs, are kept to a minimum.

Best Practices

- ✓ A higher score indicates appropriate treatment of low back pain (i.e., the proportion for whom imaging studies did not occur).
- ✓ Avoid ordering diagnostic studies within 30 days of a diagnosis of new-onset back pain in the absence of measure exclusions.
- ✓ First-line treatment should emphasize conservative measures.
- ✓ Provide patient education on cautious and responsible pain relief, activity level, stretching exercises, use of heat.
- ✓ Physical Therapy referral, including massage, stretching, strengthening exercises and manipulation.

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[1] Source: https://www.ncqa.org/report-cards/health-plans/state-of-health-care-quality-report/
[2] Source: HEDIS MY 2026 Tech Specs Manual Vol. 2

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Numerator Compliance[2]

An imaging study with a diagnosis of uncomplicated low back pain on the IESD (Index episode start date - the earliest date of service for an eligible encounter during the intake period with a principal diagnosis of low back pain) or in the 28 days following the IESD.

Summary of Changes to HEDIS MY 2026[2]

- No changes to this measure.

Data Collection Method[2]

Administrative (Claims)

Trillium Percentages/National Averages[3]

LBP	Measurement Year	Trillium	National Average
Total	2025	38.31	-

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[2] Source: HEDIS MY 2026 Tech Specs Manual Vol. 2
[3] Source: https://www.ncqa.org/programs/data-and-information-technology/data-purchase-and-licensing/quality-compass/