

Low Back Pain Coding Tool

Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS®) Measures

One measure we collect for the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) evaluates the appropriate use of imaging studies for uncomplicated low back pain (LBP). A higher percentage on this measure indicates better performance. This measure evaluates the percentage of members ages 18 to 50 diagnosed with LBP who:

- › Haven't received a prior diagnosis of LBP in the past six months
- › Haven't had imaging studies within the first 28 days of diagnosis (includes X-ray, MRI and CT scans)

Accurate Coding is Key

When treating a patient with low back pain (LBP), it's important to document and code for any exclusions that would warrant use of imaging studies. Patients with a diagnosis of uncomplicated LBP should wait 28 days or more after receiving a primary diagnosis before they undergo an imaging study (plain X-ray, MRI, or CT scan).

Below are categories and codes for HEDIS exclusions:

Early Imaging Exclusions	ICD-10 Codes
Cancer (active)	C00.0-96.Z and D00.00-49.9
Cancer (personal history)	Z85-86.03
Corticosteroid Use (90 consecutive days)	During 12 months prior to LBP diagnosis
Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)	B20; Z21
Intravenous (IV) drug abuse	F11.10-15.29 (any time during 12 months prior to LBP diagnosis)
Kidney Transplant History	Z94.0; (0TY00Z0, 0TY10Z0)

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Early Imaging Exclusions	ICD-10 Codes
Organ Transplant Other Than Kidney	02YA0Z0, 07YM0Z0, 07YP0Z0, 0BYC0Z0, 0BYD0Z0, 0BYF0Z0, 0BYG0Z0, 0BYH0Z0, 0BYJ0Z0, 0BYK0Z0, 0BYL0Z0, 0BYM0Z0, 0DY50Z0, 0DY60Z0, 0DY80Z0, 0DYE0Z0, 0FY00Z0, 0FYG0Z0, 0UY00Z0, 0UY10Z0, 0UY90Z0, 0WY20Z0, 0XYJ0Z0, 0XYK0Z0, 3E030U1, 3E033U1, 3E0J3U1, 3E0J7U1, 3E0J8U1
Neurologic Impairment	G83.4 (any time during 12 months prior to LBP diagnosis)
Spinal Infection, Osteomyelitis and Discitis	A17.81, G06.1, M46.25-46.28, M46.35-46.38, M46.46-46.48 (any time during 12 months prior to LBP diagnosis)
Trauma/Fractures	G89.11; "S" series (any time during three months prior to LBP diagnosis)



Helpful Tip

Include documentation and coding, along with the diagnosis of LBP on the claim, for "red flag" conditions (exclusions) where an imaging study should be ordered. This will prevent an open gap that can't be closed.

Alternative Treatments

Before ordering imaging for your patient, you may encourage patients to try basic treatments such as:

- › Ice
- › Heat
- › Over-the-counter pain relief
- › Stretching or back straightening exercises
- › Safe back habits