



Use of Imaging Studies for Low Back Pain

Best Practice

Approximately half of American adults experience low back pain each year and about two-thirds will suffer from it in their lifetime. Acute low back pain without complications is usually benign and self-limiting and does not necessitate early imaging studies, such as X-ray, MRI or CT scans. Studies show that there is a poor correlation of x-ray findings with low back problems when low back pain is not attributed to potentially serious spinal or non-spinal pathology. Most patients return to their usual activities in a month.¹

Wellness Report

Molina Healthcare annually monitors the use of imaging studies within 28 days of an initial primary diagnosis of low back pain.

| HEDIS [®] Measure | 2007 Rate | 2008 Rate | 2009 Rate | Goal* |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------|
| No imaging within 28 days of initial low back pain diagnosis | 73.10% | 68.42% | 70.40% | 83.00% |

* National NCQA 75th percentile for Medicaid HMO plans.

¹ American College of Radiology (ACR) *National Guidelines Clearinghouse – Low Back Pain, 2009*