

Physicians and clinical teams: Study finds imaging for lower back pain does not improve outcomes

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Chances are that one out of every four patients you see in your office has low back pain. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that in the last three months, 25% of U.S. adults report having low back pain, making it second only to the common cold as a cause for lost work time and a primary reason for a doctor's visit.¹ Back pain will usually go away on its own. About 90 percent of patients with low back pain recover within six weeks.² For this reason, the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) recommends avoiding imaging for patients when there is no indication of an underlying condition. In a study published by the CDC, [Early imaging for acute low back pain](#), the findings indicated not only was early imaging not associated with better outcomes, it also indicated that certain early imaging (MRI) was associated with an increased likelihood of disability and its duration.³

Watch this video to learn more

Take advantage of the *Recommendation for Treating Acute Low Back Pain* video located on the [CDC website](#) or use [this link](#). The video also offers communications strategies to share with patients for effectively treating their low back pain.

HEDIS® measure: Use of Imaging Studies for Low Back Pain (LBP)

Description: The percentage of members with a primary diagnosis of low back pain who **did not** have an imaging study (plain X-ray, MRI, CT scan) **within 28 days** of the diagnosis. The higher compliance score indicates appropriate treatment of low back pain.

Exclusions include cancer, recent trauma, IV drug abuse, neurologic impairment, HIV, spinal infection, major organ transplant and prolonged use of corticosteroids.

Coding tips: Here are a few of the approved codes for the diagnosis and services associated with the LBP HEDIS measure. For a complete list, visit [ncqa.org](#).

| CPT or ICD-10 | Code | Description |
|---------------|------------------------------|--|
| CPT | 72010, 72020, 72052, 72100 | Imaging study |
| ICD-10 | M47.898 | Other spondylosis, sacral and sacrococcygeal region |
| ICD-10 | M48.08 | Spinal stenosis, sacral and sacrococcygeal region |
| ICD-10 | M53.2X8 | Spinal instabilities, sacral and sacrococcygeal region |
| ICD-10 | M54.40 | Lumbago with sciatica, unspecified side |
| ICD-10 | M51.26 – M51.27 | Other intervertebral disc displacement, lumbar lumbosacral region |
| ICD-10 | M54.30 – M54.32 | Sciatica, unspecified, right side, left side |
| ICD-10 | M51.16-M51.17 | Intervertebral disc disorders with radiculopathy, lumbar region, lumbosacral region |
| ICD-10 | M51.26-M51.27 | Intervertebral disc displacement, lumbar region, lumbosacral region |
| ICD-10 | M51.36-M51.37 | Other intervertebral disc degeneration, lumbar region, lumbosacral region |
| ICD-10 | M51.86-M51.87 | Other intervertebral disc disorders, lumbar region, lumbosacral region |
| ICD-10 | M99.53 | Intervertebral disc stenosis of neural canal of lumbar region |
| ICD-10 | S33.100A, S33.100D, S33.100S | Subluxation of unspecified lumbar vertebra; initial, subsequent, sequela encounter |
| ICD-10 | S33.5XXA | Sprain of ligaments of lumbar spine; initial encounter |
| ICD-10 | S33.6XXA | Sprain of sacroiliac joint; initial encounter |
| ICD-10 | S33.8XXA | Sprain of other parts of lumbar spine and pelvis; initial encounter |
| ICD-10 | S33.9XXA | Sprain of unspecified parts of lumbar spine and pelvis; initial encounter |
| ICD-10 | S39.002A, S39.002D, S39.002S | Unspecified injury of muscle, fascia, and tendon of lower back; initial, subsequent, sequela encounter |

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|--------|------------------------------------|---|
| ICD-10 | S39.82XA, S39.82XD, S39.82XS | Other specified injuries of lower back; initial, subsequent, sequela encounter |
|--------|------------------------------------|---|

1 <https://www.cdc.gov/acute-pain/low-back-pain/index.html#:~:text=25%25%20of%20U.S.%20adults%20report,the%20most%20common%20pain%20reported.>

2 <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/CommonPainProblems/story?id=4047737#:~:text=Answer%3A%20Back%20pain%20usually%20goes,people%20recover%20faster%20than%20others>

3 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1097/BRS.0b013e318251887b>

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URL: <https://providernews.anthem.com/new-hampshire/article/physicians-and-clinical-teams-study-finds-imaging-for-lower-back-pain-does-not-improve-outcomes>

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