



Pharmacy Newsletter

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What are the CMS Star Measures?

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) uses a Five-Star Quality Rating System to measure Medicare beneficiary experience with health plans. The rating scale ranges from one star to five stars, with one being the lowest rating and five being the highest rating. CMS Star Ratings include multiple quality of care measures such as controlling blood pressure, preventive care, such as mammograms and colonoscopies, osteoporosis management (for women who have had a fracture), comprehensive diabetes care, statin and diabetes medication adherence, and others.

What are the benefits of CMS Star Ratings for providers?

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- Improvement in patient-physician relationships
- Improvement in health plan-physician relationships
- Improvement in awareness of patient safety
- Improvement in the completion of preventive screenings
- Improvement in your patient's therapeutic outcomes
- Improvement in patient medication adherence
- Benefits that support chronic condition management

What are the benefits of CMS Star Ratings for beneficiaries?

- Improvement in patient-physician relationships
- Improvement in the communication of the beneficiary's primary physician with other health care providers such as pharmacists, nurses, social workers
- Improvement in patient access to health care



- Increased level of customer service by the health plan
- Greater focus on preventive services and early detection
- Improvement in patient medication adherence to decrease hospitalization

What are some of the Star measures in pharmacy?

There are several important pharmacy measures that are subject to the CMS Star Ratings which are as follows:

- Medication adherence for hypertension (Renin-Angiotensin System (RAS) antagonists, e.g., Lisinopril and Losartan)
- Medication adherence for diabetes medications (excludes Insulin)
- Medication adherence for cholesterol (Statins)
- Statin use for people with diabetes

Did you know?

Adherence measure scores rate among the lowest in the Star Ratings, meaning there is much room for improvement. Medication adherence is measured by the percentage of days that a patient has enough medications to cover a period of time, otherwise known as the portion of days covered (PDC). The PDC is the percentage of days in the measurement period “covered” by prescription claims for the same medication or another in its therapeutic category.

It has been shown that patients who did not adhere to medications for chronic conditions often lead to worse clinical outcomes, more readmissions, and a lower quality of life. Patient adherence requires a multi-disciplinary approach from health care professionals, such as pharmacists, nurses, physicians, social workers, and others.¹ However, often overlooked is how large an impact physicians and other providers can have on a patient’s medication adherence. As an example, 2019 CMS data shows that only 50% of patients were reminded about prescription refills, and only 33% were reminded to take their medications.¹ Proactively talking to patients about their medications and offering 100-day supplies can improve adherence and lessen the burden on patients.

In addition, patient satisfaction with the prescriber-patient relationship also directly influences and improves medication adherence. Adherence rates depend on a patient’s agreement and ability to adhere to prescriber recommendations. Higher patient satisfaction is 1.2 times more likely to lead to adherence.² Purposefully applying patient-centered communication behaviors can further improve patients’ perceptions. This increases overall patient satisfaction and makes patients more likely to be engaged with their provider, pharmacist, and health plan.

Some tools for assisting patients with medication adherence

- 100-day supply, if available, for maintenance medications
- Use of mail order, delivery, and auto-refills
- Pill boxes with days of the week and/or month
- Setting reminders on a phone or watch
- Encouraging patients to ask questions and take part in their care
- Encouraging patients to speak to their pharmacist if experiencing any adverse effects or difficulty in taking the medication

We are here to help

Our plan allows up to a 100-day medication supply to improve overall medication adherence rates. Of course, the availability of these extended day supplies may depend on various state and federal regulations. If you have any questions about medication adherence, reach out to Provider Services at **866-543-2657**, and we will be happy to assist you.

¹ Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Medicare 2020 Part C & D Display Measure Technical Notes, December 9, 2019. <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Prescription-Drug-Coverage/PrescriptionDrugCovGenIn/Downloads/2019-Technical-Notes.pdf>

² Nasir NM, Ariffin F, and Yasin SM. Physician-patient interaction satisfaction and its influence on medication adherence and type-2 diabetic control in a primary care setting. *Med J Malaysia.* 2018;73(3):163-169.

