Risk of Continued Opioid Use (COU)

2026

Line(s) of business
Commercial, Medicare, Medicaid

Measure description

The percentage of persons 18 years of age and older who have a NEW episode of opioid use that puts them at risk for continued opioid use

Two rates are reported:

1. The percentage of persons with at least 15 days of prescription opioids in a 30-day period
2. The percentage of persons with at least 31 days of prescription opioids in a 62-day period

Note: A lower rate indicates better performance.

Intake period: November 1 of the year prior to the measurement period to October 31 of the measurement period

Index prescription start date (IPSD): Earliest prescription dispensing date for opioid medication during the intake period

Opioid medications: benzhydrocodone, buprenorphine (transdermal patch and buccal film), butorphanol, codeine, dihydrocodeine, fentanyl, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, levorphanol, meperidine, methadone, morphine, opium, oxycodone, oxymorphone, pentazocine, tapentadol, tramadol

This measure **does not** include the following opioid medications:

- Injectables
- Cough and cold products that contain opioids
- Single-agent and combination buprenorphine products used as part of medication-assisted treatment of opioid use disorder (buprenorphine sublingual tablets, buprenorphine subcutaneous implants and all buprenorphine/naloxone combination products)
- Ionsys® (fentanyl transdermal patch). This is for inpatient use only and is available only through a restricted program under a risk evaluation and mitigation strategy.
- Methadone for the treatment of opioid use disorder

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Commonly used codes* (not all inclusive)

Pharmacy/ prescription claims

***Do not** include laboratory claims (claims with POS code 81).*

Exclusions:

- Sickle cell anemia: **D57.00**
- Other sickle cell disorders: **191419008**
- Palliative care encounter: **G9054,**
- **305686008**
- Hospice encounter: **0115, 0125, 0135, 0145, 0155, 0235, 0650-0652, 0655-0659**
- Hospice intervention: **99377, 99378**

Medical record requirements

- Person's legal name and date of birth
- Provider/practice identifier
- Provider Business Group (PBG) name and number
- Date of Service (DOS)
- Applicable labs/tests should have identifier, collection date and results

Denominator exclusions

(Other exclusions may also apply)

- Persons with cancer, or sickle cell disease any time during the 365 days prior to the IPSD through 61 days after the IPSD
- Persons in hospice or using hospice services any time during the measurement period
- Persons with a date of death during the measurement period
- Persons receiving or who had an encounter for palliative care any time during the measurement period

Insights and recommendations

- **Supplemental data exceptions:** Supplemental data may **not** be used for this measure, except for denominator exclusions.
- Review prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/php/interventions/prescription-drug-monitoring-programs.html
- CDC overdose prevention https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/data-research/facts-stats/index.html
- The *cancer and sickle cell disease exclusions* **must** be applied.

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*FOR COMMONLY USED CODES: Not a comprehensive list of codes.
For measures that require claims data only, we cannot accept supplemental data sources such as data feeds and medical record collection methods.
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