



Imaging for Low Back Pain (LBP)

Imaging for Low Back Pain (LBP) is one of the quality measure additions for the 2021 BCBS Commercial program. **For this measure, patients ages 18-50 diagnosed with uncomplicated low back pain should wait 28 days or more from primary diagnosis before they undergo an imaging study (plain X-ray, MRI, CT scan).**

Exclusions that would warrant the use of imaging studies:

- Cancer
- Recent trauma within 90 days
- Intravenous drug abuse
- Neurologic impairment
- HIV
- Spinal infection during the year prior to the visit
- Major organ transplant
- Prolonged use of corticosteroids (≥ 90 consecutive days within the last year)
- Hospice

Note: Along with the diagnosis of low back pain, make sure to include on the claim form the documentation and coding for “red-flag” conditions (exclusions) where an imaging study should be ordered. This will prevent the gap from opening.

Encourage patients to try conservative treatments such as:

- Ice
- Heat
- OTC pain relief
- Stretching or back straightening exercises
- Safe back habits