



Concurrent Use of Opioids and Benzodiazepines (COB) Measure

The concurrent use of opioids and benzodiazepines significantly increases the risk of overdose, as both classes of medications can cause sedation and respiratory depression, the primary mechanism of fatal overdose—while also impairing cognitive function. Research indicates that individuals who use opioids and benzodiazepines together are at substantially higher risk of emergency department visits, hospital admissions for drug-related events, and death due to overdose. Concurrent Opioid and Benzodiazepine (COB) use is a Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Star Ratings measure beginning with measurement year 2025 and impacting the 2027 Star Ratings.

Measure Description:

- The percentage of individuals ages 18 and older with concurrent use of prescription opioids and benzodiazepines

Inclusion Data:

- Denominator: Patients who received two or more opioid prescriptions filled on different dates of service with a 15 or more cumulative day supply
- Numerator: Patients in the denominator who have 30 or more cumulative days of opioid and benzodiazepine overlapping supply during the measurement year.

A lower measure rate indicates better performance.

Required Member Exclusions:

- Members receiving **hospice services** in the measurement year
- Members in **palliative care** during the measurement year
- Members with **Sickle Cell Disease** during the measurement year
- Members with a **Cancer diagnosis** during the measurement year

Prescriber's Role

- Prescribe opioids and benzodiazepines as second or last option, especially for long-term treatment.
- For opioid/benzodiazepine tolerant patients, consider tapering down or switching to **alternatives****
- If appropriate, based on clinical information, providers can deny prescribing opioids/ benzodiazepines.

Consider Opioid Alternatives

- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
- Acetaminophen
- Gabapentin
- Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)
- Steroids

Refer to relevant [opioid prescribing guidelines](#) for a complete list of alternatives.