

# Medication Adherence

Pharmacy Quality Alliance-endorsed performance measures

## Measurement definition

Patients ages 18 and older with a prescription for diabetes, hypertension or cholesterol medications who fill their prescription often enough to cover 80% or more of the time they are supposed to be taking the medication.

The three measures are:

- Medication Adherence for Diabetes Medications (Non-Insulins)
- Medication Adherence for Hypertension (RAS Antagonists)
- Medication Adherence for Cholesterol (Statins)

Medications included in each measure		
Diabetes	Hypertension	Cholesterol
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Biguanides</li><li>• Sulfonylureas</li><li>• Thiazolidinediones</li><li>• Dipeptidyl peptidase (DPP)-IV inhibitors</li><li>• GLP-1 receptor agonists*</li><li>• Meglitinides</li><li>• Sodium glucose cotransporter 2 (SGLT2) inhibitors</li></ul>	<p>Renin-angiotensin system (RAS) antagonists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors</li><li>• Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs)</li><li>• Direct renin inhibitors</li></ul>	<p>Statins</p>

\*Diabetes treatment only; obesity and weight loss medications are excluded from Medicare coverage.

## Exclusions

Patients are excluded if they:

- Received hospice care during the measurement year.
- Have an end-stage renal disease diagnosis or dialysis coverage dates.
- Diabetes measure only: Have a prescription for insulin.
- Hypertension measure only: Have a prescription for sacubitril/valsartan.

## Tips for talking with patients

- Provide short and clear instructions for all prescriptions.
- Emphasize the benefits of taking the medication and the risks of not taking the medication. The benefits should outweigh the risks.
- At each visit, ask your patients about their medication habits, including the average number of doses they may miss each week. Continue with open-ended questions to identify barriers to taking medications:

- What side effects have you had from the medication, if any?
- How many doses have you forgotten to take?
- Are there any financial barriers preventing you from obtaining your prescriptions?
- What issues prevent you from refilling your prescription?
- Offer recommendations for improvement:
  - Recommend weekly or monthly pillboxes, smart phone apps with medication reminder alerts and placing medications in a visible area (but in properly closed containers and safely out of reach of children or pets) for patients who forget to take their medications.
  - Encourage patients to call your office if they experience side effects to discuss alternative medications.
  - Refer patients to their health plan to learn about mail-order options for their prescriptions.

### Tips for success

- Instruct patients to fill prescriptions using their pharmacy benefit. Claims filled through pharmacy discount programs, cash claims and medication samples would not count. Gap closure is dependent on pharmacy claims.
- Encourage patients to enroll in auto-refill programs through their pharmacy for chronic maintenance medications.
- Write 90-day supplies of maintenance medications and have your patients use a mail-order pharmacy.
- Write prescriptions with refills for patients who are stable on their medications to reduce the risk of any time lapse between fills.
- Schedule a follow-up visit within 30 days when prescribing a new medication to assess how the medication is working. Schedule this visit while your patient is still in the office.