



Quality Measure

What is this and why is it important?

- An MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) is a test that uses a powerful magnetic field and a computer to produce detailed pictures of the inside of the body (bones, organs, and other body parts).
- Although MRI scans can be helpful for diagnosing low back pain, they can also be used too much. Low back pain can improve or go away within six weeks and an MRI may not be needed.

Standards of care say that most patients with low back pain should start with treatment such as physical therapy or chiropractic care, and have an MRI only if the treatment doesn't help.

Finding out whether treatment helps or not before having an MRI can be a safe and effective way to avoid unnecessary stress, risk, or cost of doing an MRI.

Outpatients with low back pain who had an MRI without trying recommended treatments first, such as physical therapy

- For patients with certain conditions, getting an MRI right away is appropriate care. Patients with these conditions are not included in this measure.
- If you have low back pain, you, your doctor, and the medical imaging facility staff can talk about the best time to do an MRI if you need one.
- Since MRIs use magnets rather than x-rays, there is no radiation risk. However, because the magnets attract some kinds of metal, it's important for the technician to know if there are any metal objects or implants inside your body, such as pacemakers, artificial joints, screws, stents, plates, or staples. Metal objects can

pose serious risk to you during the MRI and interfere with the test.

- For some MRIs, a substance called “contrast” is injected before the test to make parts of the body stand out more clearly on the images. Risks of contrast include possible harm to the kidneys or allergic reactions. Contrast shouldn’t be used if it isn’t needed.
- Having the test can be stressful for some people. Patients must hold still for about 15 to 45 minutes while lying on a table that moves inside a large scanning machine. While images are being taken, the machine makes loud noises.

Hospitals that are rated well will have lower percentages. If a percentage is high, it may mean that the facility is doing unnecessary MRIs for low back pain.