

Concurrent Use of Opioids and Benzodiazepines (COB)

APPLICABLE LINES OF BUSINESS

- Medicare

MEASURE DESCRIPTION

The percentage of individuals ≥ 18 years of age with concurrent use of prescription opioids and benzodiazepines.ⁱ A lower rate indicates better performance.

APPLICABLE MEDICATIONS

Opioid medications		
• benzhydrocodone	• hydrocodone	• opium
• buprenorphine	• hydromorphone	• oxycodone
• butorphanol	• levorphanol	• oxymorphone
• codeine	• meperidine	• pentazocine
• dihydrocodeine	• methadone	• tapentadol
• fentanyl	• morphine	• tramadol
Benzodiazepine medications		
• alprazolam	• diazepam	• oxazepam
• chlordiazepoxide	• estazolam	• quazepam
• clobazam	• flurazepam	• temazepam
• clonazepam	• lorazepam	• triazolam
• clorazepate	• midazolam	

EXCLUSIONS

Patients are excluded if they have any of the following during the measurement year:

- Cancer
- [Hospice or palliative care](#)
- Sickle cell disease

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Discuss the benefits, risks, and availability of non-opioid therapies (chiropractic, acupuncture, physical therapy, etc.) with your patient.
- Coordinate care with all the patient’s treating providers to avoid co-prescribing.
- If co-prescribing is necessary, follow the 5 central principles from CMS for co-prescribing

benzodiazepines and opioids:

1. Avoid initial combination by offering alternative approaches such as cognitive behavioral therapy or other medication classes.
 2. If new prescriptions are needed, limit the dose and duration.
 3. Taper long-standing medications gradually and, whenever possible, discontinue.
 4. Continue long-term co-prescribing only when necessary and monitor the patient closely.
 5. Provide rescue medication (e.g., naloxone) to high-risk patients and their caregivers as co-prescribing places the patient at a high risk of opioid overdose.
- Educate the patient on the side effects of medications, including the risk of addiction and what to do if side effects appear.
 - Reinforce the treatment plan and evaluate the medication regimen. Consider the presence or absence of side effects and potential costs and provide clear written instructions for the medication schedule.