

# Concurrent Use of Opioids and Benzodiazepines (COB)



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Concurrent use of opioids and benzodiazepines significantly increases the risk of respiratory depression, overdose, emergency department visits, falls, and death. Both medication classes carry FDA boxed warnings highlighting the dangers of combined use.

This measure focuses on patient safety and quality improvement. A lower rate indicates better performance.

## COB Measure Snapshot

- Population: Patients 18 years of age and older
- Trigger: 30 or more cumulative days of overlapping opioid and benzodiazepine therapy in the measurement year
- Data Source: Pharmacy claims
- Goal: Avoid or reduce overlapping use

### Exclusions:

- Cancer diagnosis
- Sickle cell disease
- Hospice or palliative care

### Sources

1. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Concurrent Use of Opioids and Benzodiazepines (COB) – Medicare Part D Star Measure. MLN Matters SE19011.
2. Pharmacy Quality Alliance (PQA). PQA Quality Measures Overview: Concurrent Use of Opioids and Benzodiazepines.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 2022 Clinical Practice Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Pain.
4. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Drug Safety Communication: Boxed Warnings for Opioids and Benzodiazepines.
5. National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). Benzodiazepines and Opioids.

## Quality Improvement Tips for Providers

Avoid initiating opioid and benzodiazepine therapy together whenever possible. Review medication lists at every visit, deprescribe when appropriate, prescribe naloxone for high-risk patients, educate patients on overdose risk, and coordinate care across providers.

### COB-A: Opioid Medications

- Benzhydrocodone
- Buprenorphine
- Butorphanol
- Codeine
- Dihydrocodeine
- Fentanyl
- Hydrocodone
- Hydromorphone
- Levorphanol
- Meperidine
- Methadone
- Morphine
- Opium
- Oxycodone
- Oxymorphone
- Pentazocine
- Tapentadol
- Tramadol

### COB-B: Benzodiazepine Medications

- Alprazolam
- Chlordiazepoxide
- Clobazam
- Clonazepam
- Clorazepate
- Diazepam
- Estazolam
- Flurazepam
- Lorazepam
- Midazolam
- Oxazepam
- Quazepam
- Temazepam