

# Polypharmacy: Use of Multiple Anticholinergic Medications in Older Adults



At Wellcare, we value everything you do to deliver quality care to our members — your patients. We appreciate your commitment to their positive healthcare experience.

## POLY-ACH Measure

The POLY-ACH measure in the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Star Ratings uses concurrent use of two or more anticholinergic medications for a significant period to evaluate health plans.

Quality Measure	Description
<b>Polypharmacy: Use of Multiple Anticholinergic Medications in Older Adults (POLY-ACH)</b>	Percentage of patients ages 65 years or older with concurrent use of two or more unique anticholinergic medications for 30 cumulative days.
<b>POLY-ACH Exclusions</b>	Patients enrolled in hospice.
<b>Who qualifies for the measure?</b>	Members, ages 65 years and older, with at least two prescription claims for the same anticholinergic medication with different dates of service.
<b>Who is considered to be non-compliant with the measure?</b>	Members who have at least two prescription claims of at least two unique anticholinergic medications with 30 days of overlapping use.

(continued)

*For more than 20 years, Wellcare has offered a range of Medicare products, which offer affordable coverage beyond Original Medicare. Beginning Jan. 1, 2022, our affiliated Medicare product brands, including Allwell, Health Net, Fidelis Care, and 'Ohana Health Plan transitioned to the newly refreshed Wellcare brand. If you have any questions, please contact Provider Relations.*



By Allwell  
By Fidelis Care  
By Health Net  
By 'Ohana Health Plan

## Action

We have listed applicable therapeutic categories and anticholinergic medications below for easy reference.

**Please consider avoiding initial use of multiple anticholinergic medications in the elderly and discontinue medications, as appropriate.**

Category	Medications	Recommended Alternatives
<b>Antihistamines</b>	Brompheniramine Doxylamine Hydroxyzine	<b>For allergies:</b> • Intranasal steroids: fluticasone 50 mcg spray, flunisolide 0.025% spray • Second generation antihistamines: levocetirizine 5 mg tab, desloratadine 5 mg tab • Eye antihistamines: azelastine 0.05% drops, cromolyn 4% drops • Nasal antihistamines: ipratropium 21mcg and 42 mcg nasal spray and azelastine 137 mcg nasal spray • Intranasal saline: Ocean® nasal spray (over-the-counter (OTC)) <b>For sleep aid:</b> melatonin, sleep hygiene strategies • Non-BEERS list sleep medications (doxepin 3 mg and 6 mg tab, Belsomra®) <b>For anxiety:</b> SSRI or SNRI, buspirone, mirtazapine, bupropion, non-pharmacologic treatment
<b>Antiemetics</b>	Prochlorperazine Promethazine	Serotonin 5-HT3 receptor antagonists (e.g., ondansetron)
<b>Antidepressants</b>	Paroxetine Amitriptyline Nortriptyline	SSRIs and SRNIs (e.g., escitalopram, fluoxetine, sertraline, venlafaxine ER), mirtazapine, and bupropion <b>If for neuropathic pain:</b> duloxetine
<b>Antiparkinsonian Agents</b>	Benzotropine, Trihexyphenidyl	amantadine, carbidopa/levodopa, pramipexole, ropinirole
<b>Antispasmodic Agents</b>	Dicyclomine, Diphenoxylate/ Atropine, Scopolamine	<b>Constipation:</b> lactulose oral solution, polyethylene glycol powder (OTC) <b>Diarrhea:</b> loperamide
<b>Skeletal muscle relaxants</b>	Cyclobenzaprine Orphenadrine	<b>Formulary muscle relaxants:</b> baclofen 10mg and 20mg tab, Tizanidine tablet <b>For pain:</b> Tylenol® [acetaminophen] (OTC), Aleve® [naproxen] (OTC) + PPI (for gastroprotection) <b>Non-pharmacologic treatment:</b> physical therapy, heat, stretching
<b>Antipsychotics</b>	Chlorpromazine Clozapine Olanzapine	<b>General recommendation:</b> avoid antipsychotics for dementia or delirium unless there's a severe risk; try non-drug options first. • Safer drugs with some evidence include SSRIs (e.g., citalopram, sertraline) or anticonvulsants (e.g., carbamazepine) • When antipsychotic use is unavoidable, use agents such as quetiapine and risperidone at the lowest effective dose and regularly reassess the need for continuation
<b>Antimuscarinics</b>	Oxybutynin Darifenacin Trospium	<b>Non-pharmacologic:</b> bladder training, pelvic floor exercises