

# 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, Trillium Advantage, 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  
By Trillium Advantage

## 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.**

*Note: This is **not** an all-inclusive list.*

Antihistamines	Antiemetics	Antidepressants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Brompheniramine</li><li>• Doxylamine</li><li>• Hydroxyzine</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prochlorperazine</li><li>• Promethazine</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Amitriptyline</li><li>• Nortriptyline</li><li>• Paroxetine</li></ul>
Skeletal Muscle Relaxants	Antipsychotics	Antimuscarinics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cyclobenzaprine</li><li>• Orphenadrine</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chlorpromazine</li><li>• Clozapine</li><li>• Darifenacin</li><li>• Olanzapine</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Oxybutynin</li><li>• Trospium</li></ul>

## Rationale

These recommendations are based on the American Geriatrics Society (AGS) Beers Criteria® list of potentially inappropriate or unsafe medications best avoided by older adults age 65 and up. The list, updated by the AGA every three years, serves to help reduce adverse effects and improve patient safety.

### 2023 American Geriatrics Society Beers Criteria® for Potentially Clinically Important Drug Interactions That Should be Avoided in Older Adults Age 65 and Up

Drug Class	Interacting Drug Class	Risk Rationale
Anticholinergic	Anticholinergic	Use of more than one medication with anticholinergic properties increases risk of cognitive decline, delirium, falls, or fractures.



**We recognize that you are best qualified to evaluate the potential risks versus benefits in choosing the most appropriate medications for your patients.**

#### Reference

The American Geriatrics Society, Beers M. A Pocket Guide to the 2023 AGS Beers Criteria, 2023.

[gwep.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/AGS-2023-BEERS-Pocket-PRINTABLE.pdf](https://gwep.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/AGS-2023-BEERS-Pocket-PRINTABLE.pdf)