

Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is the most common behavioral disorder in children. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians concur that ADHD is experienced by up to 11 percent of school age children, with rates increasing by 3 percent per year on average. Though typically diagnosed during childhood at the average age of 7, symptoms can be exhibited as early as age 3, and can persist into adulthood. This common neuro-behavioral disorder is chronic and, left untreated, potentially leads to development of other co-morbid conditions. At the very least, a child with untreated ADHD will not be able to achieve his or her full potential academically. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also identifies these children as “at-risk” for accidental injury secondary to the key symptoms of impulsivity and inattention.

Beacon Health Options has been working on a variety of initiatives to raise awareness about the objectives of National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) HEDIS® ADHD measures, which guide our efforts in measuring the quality and effectiveness of the care provided. The ADHD measures specifically focus on follow-up care for children who are prescribed ADHD medication.

What are the HEDIS ADHD Specification **measures**?

- **The percentage of members 6-12 years of age with an initial prescription dispensed for ADHD medication and had one follow-up visit with the prescribing practitioner within the first 30 days** (initiation phase).
- **At least two follow-up visits within 9 months following the initiation phase** (continuation and maintenance phase).

What is the relevance of these **measures**?

According to the NCQA “State of Health Care Quality 2016” report:

- 10 percent of American children have been diagnosed with ADHD, and is one of the most common mental disorders affecting children.
- When managed appropriately, medication for ADHD can control symptoms of hyperactivity, impulsiveness, and inability to sustain concentration.
- To ensure proper management, it is important that children be monitored by a pediatrician with prescribing authority.
- Studies suggest there is an increased risk for drug abuse disorders in adolescents if left untreated.

It is important to note, that once a diagnosis is made, clinical practice guidelines recommend regular follow up for pharmacologic treatments during the initial and continuation phases of treatment.

Additional resources include the **ADHD Tool Kit**, developed by the National Initiative for Children’s Healthcare Quality (NICHQ) in conjunction with the American Academy of Pediatrics. The ADHD Tool Kit provides the practitioner with a variety of tools to be used in assessing and managing the child with ADHD. The Tool Kit is in the public domain and can be downloaded from <http://www.nichq.org/childrens-health/adhd/resources>.