

THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CARE ACCESS AND INFORMATION

AHRQ Postoperative Sepsis Outcomes for Elective Surgeries in California Hospitals, 2023

Overview of Postoperative Sepsis Indicator

Evidence suggests that postoperative sepsis, as one of the common in-hospital complications and adverse events, may be associated with deficiencies in the quality of care provided. The Postoperative Sepsis Indicator is part of the Patient Safety Indicators (PSIs), a suite of measures developed by the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). The PSIs focus on potentially avoidable adverse events following surgeries that represent opportunities for improvement in the delivery of care. The current postoperative sepsis results were calculated using patient data reported to the Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) in 2023 by all California-licensed hospitals.

Why Report Postoperative Sepsis Results?

HCAI reports the postoperative sepsis results for California hospitals to improve the quality of patient care in the state through greater transparency, to help consumers make more informed health care decisions, to help payers and employers spend their health care dollars wisely, and to provide hospitals performance benchmarks that aid in their review of internal processes of care and quality improvement activities.

How Did HCAI Calculate Postoperative Sepsis Rates?

Data to calculate the postoperative sepsis rates come from all California-licensed acute care hospitals. Results are statistically risk adjusted to account for variations in patient case mix to "level the playing field" and allow for [fair comparisons between hospitals](#). For this release, HCAI used Version 2024 of the AHRQ software that incorporates changes made by HCAI (see the Technical Note for details). Additional information about the postoperative sepsis calculation methods and technical details about their validity and limitations can be found on the [AHRQ website](#).

2023 Postoperative Sepsis Findings

- A total of 217,922 adult patients from 292 hospitals were identified to have undergone elective surgeries in 2023. The postoperative sepsis rate for 2023 was 0.48 percent (1,038 patients).
- Of the 292 hospitals, 287 (98.3 percent) were assigned a risk-adjusted rate and performance rating on the postoperative sepsis measure. The remaining five hospitals did not receive risk-adjusted results due to the low case volume (less than 3 cases) at each of the five hospitals.
- Of the 287 risk-adjusted hospitals, nine hospitals (3.1 percent) were rated “Above Average” on the performance rating, and 15 hospitals (5.2 percent) were rated “Below Average”. The majority (263) of the hospitals (91.6 percent) were rated as “Average”, or not significantly different from the state average rate, for postoperative sepsis.