

Medicare Star Ratings vs. Familiar Consumer Star Ratings

While the Medicare agency wanted to use an easily understandable system familiar to consumers, officials did not want to be bound by customs or the public's expectations of what the stars mean. CMS developed its **own set of rules for dialysis star ratings**, where facilities are “**graded on a curve.**” This means that all facilities are placed in a rank order, with the 30% of facilities at the bottom of the list limited to one or two stars. Patients should be aware of these **key differences** between common star ratings systems and Medicare's system:

Medicare's Dialysis Facility Compare

According to CMS, *“a one-star rating does not mean that you will receive poor care from a facility. It means that the results of one dialysis facility were below average compared to other dialysis facilities.”*

In Dialysis Facility Compare, **only 30% of facilities are eligible for four or five stars.**

In Dialysis Facility Compare, **30% of facilities automatically get one or two stars.**

Dialysis Facility Compare star ratings **do not evaluate the physical condition or amenities of a clinic.**

A Facility with one or two stars received those ratings as a penalty for measures outside of their control.



Common Star Rating Systems

One or two stars for a **movie** means “thumbs down”—seeing the movie is not a good use of your time and money.

In **online product reviews** by buyers, most products receive four or five stars.

On the website **Yelp**, only 20% of restaurants get one or two stars.

In **hotel** classification systems, one or two stars apply to budget lodgings such as motels, with no-frills accommodations, minimal on-site facilities, and no emphasis on comfort and service.

Goods or services rated one or two stars received those ratings as a penalty for measures within their control.

A one- or two-star rating should not alarm you. It does not mean your facility won't provide life-sustaining care. You should continue to attend your dialysis treatments and follow clinicians' advice on how to manage your kidney disease.