

NO PLACE LIKE THIS PLACE

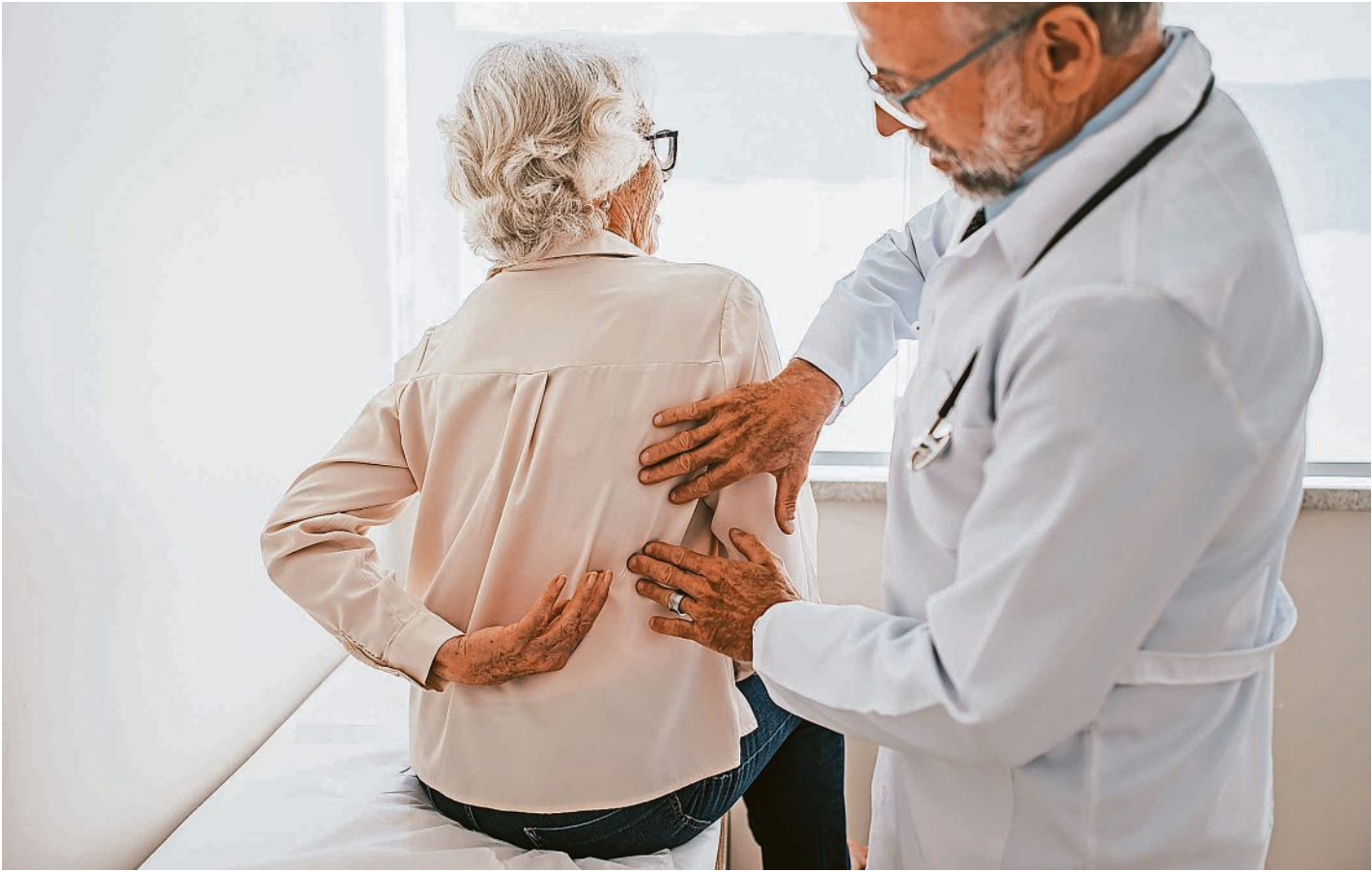
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Physicians who authored a New England Journal of Medicine article found that the WISer program could cause “considerable suffering for patients,” citing as an example a person with excruciating pain caused by spinal stenosis who is denied access to lumbar decompression. PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

AI to review Medicare claims in pilot program

Profit incentive raises concerns over restrictions of care

Stephanie Innes
Arizona Republic
USA TODAY NETWORK

A new Medicare program that uses artificial intelligence to review medical claims is set to launch in six states. Critics worry it will lead to patients being denied necessary care and more red tape for providers.

The controversial new six-year pilot program, set to begin Jan. 1, is a model that makes use of “leveraging enhanced technologies” operated by private, for-profit companies to authorize – and possibly deny – certain medical care for people enrolled in traditional Medicare, often also known as original Medicare. The enhanced technologies include AI.



The Wasteful and Inappropriate Service Reduction, or WISer, will use “enhanced technologies” operated by private, for-profit companies to authorize – and possibly deny – certain medical care for people enrolled in traditional Medicare.

Some providers and a group of Democrats in Congress have tried to put a stop to the federal pilot program, which is called WISer (Wasteful and Inappropriate Service Reduction), but their efforts have not been successful.

Sen. Mark Kelly, a Democrat from Arizona, criticized WISer on the social media platform X, characterizing it as a way for AI companies to profit off of denying care to seniors.

Officials with the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services say the program is designed to protect taxpayers. They say it will cut down on wasteful spending in Medicare, which is primarily for ages 65 and over, as well as some who are younger with certain disabilities and those with end-stage renal failure. The six states in the pilot program are Arizona, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas and Washington.

CMS administrator Dr. Mehmet Oz, who has made “crushing” Medicare fraud a priority, has said that the model will help bring Medicare into the 21st century by testing a “streamlined prior authorization process,

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DMV point system is changing in 2026

Emily Barnes
New York Connect Team
USA TODAY NETWORK

The New York state Department of Motor Vehicle’s Driver Point System is expected to undergo some changes in the new year.

According to the DMV, several new traffic safety regulations, including higher point allotments for certain violations, will become enforceable in early 2026 after the agency’s new modernized system is completed.

These changes would “bolster the ability to remove drivers who engage in risky behavior from New York roadways and make it more difficult for persistent violators to get back their driving privilege,” a September 2023 news release about the proposed amendments said.

How the point system works

The point system is in place to help the DMV find and penalize high-risk drivers with a larger goal of improving the overall safety of New York’s roads, the DMV says.

For points to be added to your driving record, you must be convicted of a traffic violation and those points will stay on your record as long as the conviction is on your record.

Your point total, which currently consists of all points for violations that occurred within the last 18 months and resets after that time period, is calculated based on the date of the violation, not the date of the conviction.

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Note to readers

We will not be printing a paper on Thursday, Jan. 1, but will be providing it to you via the eNewspaper. You can always find the latest news on our website, mobile app, newsletters and social media. Subscribers can access the eNewspaper by going to our website and clicking on eNewspaper in the black navigation bar.

What foods were ordered most on Grubhub in 2025?

Victoria E. Freile
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USA TODAY NETWORK

Beans were more than the pulse of Grubhub in 2025, according to an annual trend report by the company.

Insights published by the Chicago-based company suggest that beans led the “foodmaxxing” trend that topped the charts in 2025, with an increase in orders that were functional, nutritious and attractive.

Foodmaxxing is a “cultural shift where meals, snacks, drinks and groce-

ry orders were designed for maximum nutritional value, functional payoff, and yes, a little extra aesthetic appeal for their social feeds,” according to the Grubhub report.

“People wanted meals that did everything from boosting energy to supporting gut health, and of course, hitting those protein goals,” Grubhub said in the report. “If food didn’t do something for you, it wasn’t getting ordered.”

From grocery orders to drinks, “foodmaxxing” dominated Grubhub’s 2025 Delivered Report, which collected and analyzed data from millions of orders on

Grubhub platforms. Evaluated data stemmed from orders placed between Jan. 1 and Oct. 15, according to the report.

Here’s more on the foods and drinks that were featured in the report:

- **Legumes** – Grocery orders jumped 135%, totaling more than 1.5 tons of legumes delivered nationwide.
- **Tinned fish** – Grubhub orders of tinned fish tripled in 2025, with grocery purchases up 209% above 2024 orders.
- **Protein-labeled grocery items** –

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From grocery orders to drinks, “foodmaxxing” dominated Grubhub’s 2025 Delivered Report.
SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES

