

Inappropriate Primary Diagnosis Codes Policy, Professional

IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT THIS REIMBURSEMENT POLICY

This policy is applicable to UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage Plans offered by UnitedHealthcare and its affiliates.

You are responsible for submission of accurate claims. This reimbursement policy is intended to ensure that you are reimbursed based on the code or codes that correctly describe the health care services provided. UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage reimbursement policies use Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®*), Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), or other coding guidelines. References to CPT or other sources are for definitional purposes only and do not imply any right to reimbursement.

This reimbursement policy applies to all health care services billed on CMS 1500 forms. Coding methodology, industry-standard reimbursement logic, regulatory requirements, benefits design and other factors are considered in developing reimbursement policy.

This information is intended to serve only as a general resource regarding UnitedHealthcare's Medicare Advantage reimbursement policy for the services described and is not intended to address every aspect of a reimbursement situation. Accordingly, UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage may use reasonable discretion in interpreting and applying this policy to health care services provided in a particular case. Further, the policy does not address all issues related to reimbursement for health care services provided to UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage enrollees. Other factors affecting reimbursement may supplement, modify or, in some cases, supersede this policy. These factors may include, but are not limited to: legislative mandates, the physician or other provider contracts, and/or the enrollee's benefit coverage documents**. Finally, this policy may not be implemented exactly the same way on the different electronic claims processing systems used by UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage due to programming or other constraints; however, UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage strives to minimize these variations.

UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage may modify this reimbursement policy at any time to comply with changes in CMS policy and other national standard coding guidelines by publishing a new version of the reimbursement policy on this website. However, the information presented in this reimbursement policy is accurate and current as of the date of publication. UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage encourages physicians and other health care professionals to keep current with any CMS policy changes and/or billing requirements by referring to the CMS or your local carrier website regularly. Physicians and other health care professionals can sign up for regular distributions for policy or regulatory changes directly from CMS and/or your local carrier. UnitedHealthcare's Medicare Advantage reimbursement policies do not include notations regarding prior authorization requirements.

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*** For more information on a specific enrollee's benefit coverage, please call the customer service number on the back of the member ID card.*

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Application

This reimbursement policy applies to all Medicare Advantage products and for services reported using the 1500 Health Insurance Claim Form (a/k/a CMS 1500) or its electronic equivalent or its successor form. This policy applies to all network physicians and other qualified health care professionals.

Policy**Overview**

The International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-10-CM) Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting, developed through a collaboration of The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), provides clear direction on the coding and sequencing of diagnosis codes. Utilizing the ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting, this policy identifies diagnosis codes, which should never be billed as primary on a CMS-1500 claim form or its electronic equivalent.

Reimbursement Guidelines

UnitedHealthcare will deny claims where an inappropriate diagnosis is pointed to or linked as primary in box 24E (Diagnosis Pointer) on a CMS-1500 claim form or its electronic equivalent. When a code on the Inappropriate Primary Diagnosis List is pointed to or linked as the primary diagnosis on the claim form, the associated claim line(s) will be denied.

Inappropriate Primary Diagnosis Codes Determination

The following criteria, used to determine codes that are added to the Inappropriate Primary Diagnosis Codes list, are sourced to the Official ICD-10-CM Guidelines for Coding and Reporting, which govern the use of specific codes:

Manifestation codes

- Manifestation codes cannot be reported as first listed or principal diagnoses. In most cases the manifestation codes will include the verbiage, “in diseases classified elsewhere.”

“Code first” notes when not a manifestation code

- “Code first” notes occur with certain codes that are not specifically manifestation codes but may be due to an underlying cause. When a “code first” note is present which is caused by an underlying condition, the underlying condition is to be sequenced first if known.

Sequela codes

- Coding of sequela generally requires two codes sequenced with the condition or nature of the sequela first and the sequela code second. An exception to this guideline is those instances where the code for the sequela is followed by a manifestation code identified in the tabular list and title, or the sequela code has been expanded at the fourth, fifth or sixth characters to include the manifestation(s).

Malignant neoplasm associated with transplanted organ

- A malignant neoplasm of a transplanted organ should be coded as a transplant complication. Assign first the appropriate code for complications of transplanted organs and tissue (category T86), followed by code C80.2, Malignant neoplasm associated with transplanted organ.

Conditions due to external or toxic agents

- For any conditions which have been caused by external or toxic agents, assign first the appropriate code for the external or toxic agent (category T51-T65), followed by the condition.

Gout (Category M1A - M10)

- For lead-induced gout and lead-induced chronic gout, code first toxic effects of lead and its compounds (Category T56.0).

- For gout and chronic gout due to renal impairment, code first associated renal disease.
- For other secondary gout and other secondary chronic gout, code first associated condition.

Symptoms and signs specifically associated with systemic inflammation and infection (Category R65)

- When systemic inflammatory response syndrome (SIRS) is present with a noninfectious condition and no subsequent infection is present, assign first the appropriate code for the underlying condition, followed by a code from Category R65.1, SIRS of non-infectious origin.
- Severe sepsis requires a code for the underlying systemic infection be sequenced first, followed by a code from category R65.2, Severe sepsis.

Burns and corrosions of external body surfaces specified by site, or those confined to eye and internal organs (Category T20-T28)

- For corrosion burns of external body surfaces specified by site or those confined to eye and internal organs, assign first the appropriate code for the chemical and intent (Category T51-T65), followed by the corrosion burn code. Non-corrosion burns may be sequenced first.

Poisoning by adverse effects of and underdosing of drugs, medicaments, and biological substances (Category T36-T50)

- For adverse effects of drugs, medicaments, and biological substances, assign first the appropriate code for the nature of the adverse effect, followed by the appropriate code for the adverse effect of the drug (Category T36-T50).
- Codes for underdosing (Category T36-T50) should never be assigned as principal or first-listed diagnosis codes.
- Codes for poisoning (Category T36-T50) may be sequenced first.

External causes of morbidity (Category V00-Y99)

- The external cause of morbidity codes should never be sequenced as the first-listed or principal diagnosis, as they are intended only to provide data for injury research and evaluation of injury prevention strategies.

Factors influencing health status (Category of codes beginning with Z)

- Codes Z15.03-Z15.09, Z15.81, Z15.89
- Category Z16 Sequence the infection code first.
- Category Z17 Sequence the malignant neoplasm of breast code first.
- Category Z19 Sequence the malignant neoplasm code first.
- Code Z33.1 This code is a secondary code only for use when the pregnancy is in no way complicating the reason for visit. Otherwise, a code from the obstetric chapter is required.
- Category Z37 The outcome of delivery (Category Z37) should be included on all maternal delivery records, and it is always sequenced as a secondary code.
- Category Z3A Sequence first complications of pregnancy, childbirth, and the puerperium (O00-O9A), followed by a code from Category Z3A to identify the specific week of the pregnancy.
- Z55-Z65 These codes should only be reported as secondary diagnoses.
- Category Z68 The BMI codes should only be reported as secondary diagnoses.
- Category Z91.12 Sequence the underdosing of medication (T36-T50) first.
- Category Z91.13 Patient's unintentional underdosing of medication regimen. Sequence the underdosing of medication (T36-T50) first.
- Code Z91.83 Sequence the underlying disorder first.
- Code Z92.82 Sequence the condition requiring tPA first.

Refer to the Inappropriate Primary Diagnosis ICD-10-CM Code List in the Attachments section below for all codes applicable to this policy.

Definitions

Primary Diagnosis	Primary diagnosis is the diagnosis to which the majority of the resources were applied
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Questions and Answers**1**

Q: When an inappropriate diagnosis code is pointed to or linked as primary in box 24E on a CMS-1500 claim form or its electronic equivalent and there is more than one claim line, will the entire claim be denied?

A: No. Only the claim line(s) associated with the diagnosis code inappropriately reported as primary in box 24E will be denied by this policy.

Attachments

[Inappropriate Primary Diagnosis ICD-10-CM Code List](#)

A list of ICD-10-CM diagnosis codes that are inappropriate to be used as the primary diagnosis

Resources

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS Manual System and other CMS publications and services

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision, Clinical Modification

ICD 10 Guidelines- ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting

History

1/1/2024

Policy Implemented by UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage