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Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

DOCUMENTATION AND CODING

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) prevents airflow to the lungs, causing breathing problems and is a leading cause of death in the U.S. according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).¹ The two most common forms of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) are emphysema and chronic bronchitis. However, many patients diagnosed with COPD have both emphysema **and** chronic bronchitis.

Include in medical record

When documenting COPD to the highest level of specificity, include:

- Type: asthma with COPD, chronic asthmatic bronchitis, or chronic obstructive tracheobronchitis.
- Severity: acute exacerbation, acute-on-chronic exacerbation or chronic respiratory failure.
- Comorbidities: pulmonary artery disease, malnutrition, diabetes, cardiac disease, or heart failure.
- Infection: any acute lower respiratory infection and the infectious agent.
- Cause: identify any additional lung disease due to external agents such as organic dust, chemical gases, fumes, or vapors.
- Tobacco use or exposure: any related tobacco use, abuse, dependence, or exposure to secondhand smoke.

Coding information

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and Emphysema

Coding for COPD and emphysema:

ICD-10-CM code ²	Description
J41.0	Simple chronic bronchitis
J41.1	Mucopurulent chronic bronchitis
J41.8	Mixed simple and mucopurulent chronic bronchitis
J43.9	Emphysema, unspecified
J44.0	COPD with acute lower respiratory infection
J44.1	COPD with (acute) exacerbation

ICD-10-CM code	Description
J44.9	COPD, unspecified
J41.0	Simple chronic bronchitis
J41.1	Mucopurulent chronic bronchitis
J41.8	Mixed simple and mucopurulent chronic bronchitis
J42	Unspecified chronic bronchitis
J43.9	Emphysema, unspecified
J44.0	COPD with acute lower respiratory infection
J44.1	COPD with (acute) exacerbation
J44.9	COPD, unspecified
J45.2	Mild intermittent asthma
J45.3	Mild persistent asthma
J45.4	Moderate persistent asthma
J45.5	Severe persistent asthma
J45.9	Other and unspecified asthma
J96.10	Chronic respiratory failure, unspecified
J96.11	Chronic respiratory failure with hypoxia
J96.12	Chronic respiratory failure with hypercapnia
Z93.0	Tracheostomy status
Z99.11	Dependence on ventilator status

Asthma

Coding for asthma:

ICD-10-CM code	Description
J45.2	Mild intermittent asthma
J45.3	Mild persistent asthma
J45.4	Moderate persistent asthma
J45.5	Severe persistent asthma
J45.9	Other and unspecified asthma
J45.990	Exercise induced bronchospasm
J45.991	Cough variant asthma
J45.998	Other asthma

Other Respiratory Disease

Coding for other respiratory diseases:

ICD-10-CM code	Description
J96.10	Chronic respiratory failure, unspecified
J96.11	Chronic respiratory failure with hypoxia
J96.12	Chronic respiratory failure with hypercapnia
R05.3	Chronic cough
Z99.81	Dependence on supplemental long-term oxygen

Additional codes to identify tobacco usage, or other environmental exposure:

ICD-10-CM code	Description
F17.-	Tobacco dependence
Z72.0	Tobacco use
Z77.22	Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke
Z87.891	History of tobacco dependence
Z87.09	History of chronic cough, bronchitis or asthma
Z82.5	Family history of asthma and other chronic lower respiratory diseases
Z83.6	Other respiratory disease

Tips for success

Always document and code to the highest level of specificity and report diagnosis codes at their highest number of characters available.

- ICD-10-CM code J44.9 (COPD, unspecified) should only be used if the information in the medical record is insufficient to assign a more specific code.
- When COPD with an acute exacerbation is documented without acute bronchitis, then report ICD- 10-CM code J44.1 (COPD with acute exacerbation).
- Code J44.0 (COPD with acute lower respiratory infection) is assigned when the medical record supports acute bronchitis and COPD. An additional code is used to identify the infection.

¹Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). 2024. [About COPD | COPD | CDC](#)

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