

Medicare Risk Adjustment Coding Focus

Aneurysm



An aneurysm occurs when layers in the wall of an artery weaken, creating an abnormal bulge.¹ Aneurysms may form at any age and are more common in men than women. Aneurysms can occur in any part of the body; however, one of the most common areas is the aorta, which is the largest vein in the body. According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, 13,000 Americans die from aortic aneurysms each year mostly resulting from a rupture or dissection.²

There are two types of aortic aneurysms: thoracic and abdominal. Thoracic aneurysms occur in the upper area of the aorta, whereas an abdominal aneurysm occurs in the lower area of the aorta. Once developed, an aneurysm can cause blood to leak into the artery walls, known as dissection, or it can completely burst, resulting in a rupture.

Signs and symptoms

Depending on the type and location of an aortic aneurysm, signs and symptoms may vary. An aneurysm can develop for years without causing any complication until it ruptures, grows large enough to place pressure on surrounding body parts, or obstructs blood flow, which may become life-threatening.

If an aneurysm quickly expands or ruptures, the sudden onset of symptoms may include (not all-inclusive):

- Nausea and vomiting.
- Pain.
- Dizziness.
- Rapid heart rate.

Causes and treatment

The cause of an aneurysm may be unknown; however, certain risk factors may impact the type of aneurysm one may experience. The most common risk factors for an aortic aneurysm are diseases that can damage the heart and blood

vessels, inherited connective tissue disorders, unhealthy diet, and social behavior of smoking and drug use.

Treatment options depend upon multiple factors including the type, appearance, and location of an aneurysm. Angiograms, CT scans, and ultrasounds are common tests performed to diagnose an aneurysm.³ Once diagnosed, treatment options may include medication or surgery and, in some instances, both. Treatment may not be required for aneurysms that are found early and are not causing symptoms, whereas those with emergent symptoms need to seek immediate medical attention.

Coding guidance

Chapter 9 of the ICD-10-CM contains codes related to diseases of the circulatory system for which the subtopic of aneurysms is listed.⁴ To properly code an aneurysm, documentation must specify the type, location, size, whether or not a rupture has occurred, and if it has been repaired. Documentation of such detail is needed; coders cannot make assumptions. Aortic aneurysms with or without rupture are coded from ICD-10-CM category I71.

I71 Aortic aneurysm with rupture (HCC 107)

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|-------|---|
| I71.1 | Thoracic aortic aneurysm, ruptured |
| I71.3 | Abdominal aortic aneurysm, ruptured |
| I71.5 | Thoracoabdominal aortic aneurysm, ruptured |
| I71.8 | Aortic aneurysm of unspecified site, ruptured |

I71 Aortic aneurysm without rupture (HCC 108)

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| I71.2 | Thoracic aortic aneurysm, without rupture |
| I71.4 | Abdominal aortic aneurysm, without rupture |
| I71.6 | Thoracoabdominal aortic aneurysm, without rupture |
| I71.9 | Aortic aneurysm of unspecified site, without rupture |

Resources

- 1 Health Line. (n.d.) Aneurysm: Causes, Symptoms, & Diagnosis. Accessed May 11, 2018 from healthline.com.
- 2 National Heart, Lung, and Blood (n.d.) Aneurysm. Accessed May 24, 2018 from www.nhlbi.nlm.nih.gov.
- 3 American Heart Association (n.d.). What is an Aneurysm? Accessed May 14, 218 from heart.org.
- 4 Schmidt, A. & Patterson, L. (2018). ICD-10-CM Expert for Physicians. Optum Insight Inc.

Reference the ICD-10-CM Codebook, CMS-HCC Risk Adjustment Model(s) and AHA Coding Clinic for complete code sets and official coding guidance.