

Medicare Risk Adjustment Coding Focus

Chronic bronchitis

Bronchitis is an inflammation of the airway passages (bronchial tubes). While acute bronchitis typically clears up in a few days, chronic bronchitis is a more serious and progressive condition in which a mucus-filled cough (also referred to as smoker's cough) lasts at least three months out of the year for two consecutive years.¹

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately nine million adults in the United States were diagnosed with chronic bronchitis in the past year. Although this condition can affect anyone, people over the age of 45 are more likely to develop it.² Smoking is the main cause and over 90% of persons with chronic bronchitis have a history of smoking.³

Signs and symptoms

Acute and chronic bronchitis share similar signs and symptoms, the main difference is the length of time a person may experience the symptoms.

The most common symptom of bronchitis is a persistent cough with mucus, other symptoms may include:

- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing
- Fatigue
- Chest discomfort
- Sinus congestion

When all other symptoms of bronchitis appear to be gone, the cough can last longer during the healing process of the bronchial tubes. Bronchitis can lead to pneumonia; a physician consult may be required.¹

Causes and treatment

Cigarette smoking is the most common cause of chronic bronchitis. Exposure to chemical fumes, dust, secondhand smoke and other environmental pollutants are other contributing factors. In addition to avoiding exposure to lung irritants, a person can reduce their risk of contracting bronchitis by regularly washing their hands, obtaining recommended vaccinations, and

avoiding persons with a cold or flu.⁴ Chronic bronchitis is an incurable condition in which treatment is centered on relieving symptoms and slowing disease progression. Treatment options include medication, oxygen therapy, and pulmonary rehabilitation.³

Coding guidance

Guidelines for coding chronic bronchitis are found in chapter 10 of the ICD-10-CM codebook, listed under categories J41 (Simple and mucopurulent chronic bronchitis) and J42 (Unspecified chronic bronchitis). These code sets include **excludes one notations**. There is also a **use additional code** note to identify tobacco exposure, use, and/or dependency that allows for coding to the highest level of detail.⁵

Chronic Bronchitis (HCC 111)	
J41.0	Simple chronic
J41.1	Mucopurulent
J41.8	Mixed and simple mucopurulent
J42	Unspecified
*Use additional code to identify:	
Z77.22	Exposure to tobacco smoke
P96.81	Exposure to tobacco smoke (Perinatal period)
Z87.891	History of tobacco dependence
Z57.31	Occupational exposure tobacco smoke
F17.XXX	Tobacco dependence
Z72.0	Tobacco use

Resources

- ¹ Bennington-Castro, J. (2018). *Chronic Bronchitis and COPD*. Accessed July 19, 2018 from <https://www.everydayhealth.com>
- ² National Center for Health Statistics. (2017). *COPD Includes: Bronchitis and Emphysema*. Accessed July 19, 2018 from <https://www.cdc.gov>
- ³ Madell, R. (n.d.). *Understanding Chronic Bronchitis: What Is It?* Accessed July 19, 2018 from <https://www.healthline.com>
- ⁴ What Is Bronchitis? (n.d.). Accessed July 19, 2018 from <https://www.webmd.com>
- ⁵ 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.