

# Medicare Risk Adjustment Coding Focus

## Systolic, diastolic, and combined type heart failure

Congestive heart failure (CHF) occurs when either disease or defect causes the heart muscle to lose the ability to pump blood efficiently. Backpressure in the veins forces fluid to seep out and settle in the lungs and other tissues. In chronic CHF, the heart muscle (mainly the ventricles) slowly weakens and enlarges preventing the heart from pumping enough blood.

In systolic CHF, the ventricles cannot produce enough pressure in the contraction phase to push blood into circulation. On the other hand, in diastolic CHF, the ventricles cannot relax, expand, or fill with enough blood. Combined CHF is a combination of the two.

Ejection fraction (EF) is a measurement of the percentage of blood pumped out during systole compared to the total amount of blood that fills the ventricle in diastole. The measurement uses diagnostic tests such as an echocardiogram, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), or a nuclear stress test.<sup>1</sup>

In systolic heart failure, also referred to as heart failure with reduced ejection fraction (HFrEF), EF is reduced due to the left ventricle not contracting properly. In diastolic heart failure, the left ventricle cannot fully relax and fill properly so the EF remains normal or high, otherwise called heart failure with preserved ejection fraction (HFpEF).<sup>2</sup>

### Signs and symptoms

Several signs and symptoms of heart failure include but may not be limited to shortness of breath, fatigue, swelling in the legs, rapid heartbeat, and fluid retention. Warning signs of worsening heart failure that require hospitalization or emergency treatment may include any of the following: chest pain, fainting, rapid or irregular heartbeat, and sudden shortness of breath with pink-tinged sputum.<sup>3</sup>

### Risk factors

There are several risk factors for heart failure including those a patient may be able to control as well as those inherent in the patient. Risk factors an individual may be able to control include, but may not be limited to, alcohol and tobacco use, diet, exercise, obesity, and managing other diseases such as blood pressure and diabetes.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, there are risk factors such as an individual's age, sex, heredity, and congenital defects that are beyond a patient's control.

### Treatment

Heart failure is a chronic disease but it can be manageable if treatment plans are created, implemented, and followed. Treatment options include lifestyle changes such as diet and exercise and managing stress levels; medications such as diuretics, angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors such as lisinopril, angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARB) like losartan, and beta-blockers such as carvedilol; and/or devices such as a left ventricular assist device (LVAD) may be used.<sup>1</sup>

### Coding guidance

The basis of ICD-10-CM diagnosis code selection is the type and acuity of left-sided heart failure.<sup>4</sup> AHA Coding Clinic, 2016, 1Q, page 10, states: "These terms HFpEF and HFrEF are more contemporary terms that are being more frequently used, and can be further described as acute or chronic. Therefore when the provider has documented HFpEF, HFrEF, or other similar terms noted above, the coder may interpret these as "diastolic heart failure" or "systolic heart failure", respectively, or a combination of both indicated, and assign the appropriate ICD-10-CM codes."

Based on their independent clinical judgment and evaluation of the patient during the face-to-face encounter, providers must document the specific type and acuity of heart failure in order to code to the highest degree of specificity.

Systolic, Diastolic, and Combined Type Heart Failure	
I50.2	*Systolic (congestive) heart failure
I50.3	*Diastolic (congestive) heart failure
I50.4	*Combined systolic and diastolic heart failure (Code also end stage heart failure, if applicable (I50.84))
*Use additional characters for acute, chronic, and acute on chronic	

### Resources

- American Heart Association (accessed August 2020): <https://www.heart.org>
- Cleveland Clinic: *Heart Failure: Understanding Heart Failure* (accessed August 2020): <https://my.clevelandclinic.org>
- Mayo Clinic: *Heart Failure* (accessed August 2020); <https://www.mayoclinic.org>
- Optum 360° (2019) *ICD-10-CM Expert for Physicians, The complete official code set.*

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