

Medicare Risk Adjustment Coding Focus

Chronic Bronchitis



Overview

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 9 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 percent 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.⁵

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 1 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 everydayhealth.com

² National Center for Health Statistics. (2017). COPD Includes: Bronchitis and Emphysema. Accessed July 19, 2018 from cdc.gov

³ Madell, R. (n.d.). Understanding Chronic Bronchitis: What Is It? Accessed July 19, 2018 from healthline.com

⁴ What Is Bronchitis? (n.d.). Accessed July 19, 2018 from www.webmd.com

⁵ Schmidt, A. & Patterson, L. (2018). ICD-10-CM Expert for Physicians. Optum Insight Inc.