

# Medicare Risk Adjustment Coding Focus

## Chronic kidney disease

According to the National Kidney Foundation, the kidney's main function is to filter waste product and excess fluid from the body through urine. If the kidneys are not functioning properly, waste can build to high levels in the bloodstream. Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is defined as the presence of a kidney abnormality, with reduced kidney function for a period of three months or longer.

CKD is also referred to as chronic renal disease. Approximately 37 million American adults have CKD, while millions of others are at an increased risk of developing CKD.

### Causes

The two main diseases that cause CKD are diabetes and hypertension. Diabetes occurs when a person's blood sugar is too high; it can cause damage to many organs including the kidneys. Hypertension (i.e., high blood pressure) occurs when the force of blood against the artery walls increases. If not controlled, hypertension can cause many complications including CKD.

### Detection

To prevent the progression of kidney disease, early detection and treatment are key. There are two simple tests that can be performed to detect kidney disease:

1. **Albumin-to-Creatinine Ratio (ACR)**- Albumin is a protein that is normally found in the blood but can pass into the urine if kidneys are damaged. Creatinine is a waste product that is filtered from the blood by the kidneys and is excreted in urine. ACR measures the ratio of albumin to creatinine in the urine. The worse the CKD, the higher the ACR will be.
2. **Estimated Glomerular Filtration Rate (eGFR)** is an estimate of the rate at which kidneys filter the blood of waste products. The blood level of a specific waste product, creatinine, along with age, race, and sex are used in calculating the eGFR. The worse the CKD, the lower the eGFR will be.

eGFR is the best test available to determine the stage of CKD. The table below includes the stage of CKD, the

severity of kidney function loss, eGFR range, and the corresponding ICD-10-CM code.

Stage	Loss of kidney function	GFR	ICD-10 code
1	Normal to slightly decreased	> 90	N18.1
2	Mild	60-89	N18.2
3a	Mild to Moderate	44-59	N18.3
3b	Moderate to Severe	30-44	N18.3
4	Severe	15-29	N18.4
5	Kidney Failure not requiring dialysis	< 15	N18.5
6	End stage renal disease requiring dialysis	< 15	N18.6

### Coding guidance

There are instructional notes in the ICD-10-CM code book to code the underlying cause:

- Diabetic CKD (E08.22, E09.22, E10.22, E11.22, E13.22)
- Hypertensive CKD (I12-, I13-)

In the ICD-10-CM Alphabet Index, CKD is listed under the subterm with for both diabetes and hypertension. Unless the documentation clearly states that CKD is due to a different cause or is unrelated to diabetes or hypertension, the relationship is to be assumed.

Provider documentation must explicitly state the stage of CKD to ensure accurate code assignment. Coders cannot abstract the stage of CKD based on documented eGFR. Although kidney function can improve or worsen over time, providers should avoid documenting multiple stages of CKD in the same encounter. The stage of CKD documented should reflect the patient's kidney function at the time of that encounter.

### Resources

- 1 National Kidney Foundation website (accessed July 2020): <https://www.kidney.org>
- 2 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.