

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma

Documentation and coding: Individual & Family Plans
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For coding education questions, email CignaHealthcareHCPEducation@CignaHealthcare.com.

It's important to accurately document and code diagnoses when submitting claims for your patients with Cigna Healthcare-administered coverage. This helps ensure your diagnosis and coding practices comply with all applicable legal requirements,¹ while enabling us to provide our customers with the benefits and resources they need. For additional information and resources, visit the Cigna Healthcare Individual & Family Plans page at CignaforHCP.com/IFP.

The information that follows is designed to provide guidance for the documentation and coding of claims for your patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. It is not meant to replace your judgment when caring for your patients.

Definition

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

refers to a group of diseases that cause airflow blockage and breathing-related problems.²

Asthma is a disease that affects the lungs with episodes of wheezing, difficulty breathing, and coughing.^{2,3}

When a patient has asthma along with bronchitis, COPD, or emphysema, the correct code assignment depends on which conditions are documented. International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision (ICD-10-CM) and *Coding Clinic* provide specific guidance for these combinations, summarized in the table below.

Note: Do not assign unspecified asthma, uncomplicated (J45.909) as it is not considered a type of asthma.

Asthma	Chronic bronchitis	COPD	Emphysema	Code(s) to assign
Only code asthma with J43 through J44 if the type is specified.				
		X		J44.9
X	X	X	X	J44.89 + J45.-
X	X		X	J44.89 + J45.-
X	X			J44.89 + J45.-
	X	X	X	J44.89
	X	X		J44.89
	X		X	J44.89
X		X		J44.89 + J45.-
		X	X	J43.9 ³
X			X	J44.89 + J45.-
X		X	X	J43.9 + J45.-

Additional reminders:

- Pneumonia is not an acute exacerbation of COPD. When these two conditions coexist, code them separately.
- Hypoxia is not inherent in COPD. When COPD is documented with hypoxia, use code R09.02.
- Use tobacco-use status and nicotine-dependence status using the ICD-10-CM codes below, if applicable (see last chart).

General guidance

- Asthma and COPD should be documented and addressed by the provider every time the condition is being actively monitored, treated, managed, or affects a patient's care, even if it is not the primary reason for the visit.
- The patient's medication list should be reviewed and updated at every encounter.

Asthma

ICD-10 code	Description	Additional character
J45.2-	Mild intermittent	(-) Add 5th character: 0 – uncomplicated 1 – acute exacerbation 2 – status asthmaticus
J45.3-	Mild persistent	(-) Add 5th character: 0 – uncomplicated 1 – acute exacerbation 2 – status asthmaticus
J45.4-	Moderate persistent	(-) Add 5th character: 0 – uncomplicated 1 – acute exacerbation 2 – status asthmaticus

Other respiratory conditions

ICD-10 code	Description	Documentation and coding tips
J41.0	Simple chronic bronchitis	Use additional code to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tobacco dependence (F17.-). Tobacco use (Z72.0). History of tobacco dependence (Z87.891). Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (Z77.22). Occupational exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (Z57.31).
J41.1	Mucopurulent chronic bronchitis	
J41.8	Mixed simple and mucopurulent chronic bronchitis	
J42.0	Unspecified chronic bronchitis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chronic bronchitis NOS Chronic tracheitis Chronic tracheobronchitis 	
J43.0	Unilateral pulmonary emphysema [MacLeod's syndrome] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swyer-James syndrome Unilateral emphysema Unilateral pulmonary artery functional hypoplasia Unilateral transparency 	
J43.1	Panlobular emphysema <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panacinar emphysema 	
J43.2	Centrilobular emphysema	
J43.8	Other emphysema	
J43.9	Emphysema, unspecified <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bullous emphysema (lung)(pulmonary) Emphysema (lung) (pulmonary)(NOS) Emphysematous bleb Vesicular emphysema (lung)(pulmonary) 	
J44.0	COPD with acute lower respiratory infection	
J44.1	COPD with (acute) exacerbation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decompensated COPD Decompensated COPD with (acute) exacerbation 	Use additional code to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of asthma, if applicable (J45.-).
J44.81	Bronchiolitis obliterans	Use additional code to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transplant status/complications when applicable
J44.89	Other specified COPD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chronic asthmatic (obstructive) bronchitis Chronic emphysematous bronchitis 	
J44.9	COPD, unspecified <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chronic obstructive airway disease NOS Chronic obstructive lung disease NOS Chronic bronchitis with airway obstruction 	<i>Excludes lung diseases due to external agents.</i> Use additional code to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of asthma, if applicable (J45.-).
J96.10	Chronic respiratory failure, unspecified whether with hypoxia or hypercapnia	

Other respiratory conditions (continued)

ICD-10 code	Description	Documentation and coding tips
J96.11	Chronic respiratory failure with hypoxia	
J96.12	Chronic respiratory failure with hypercapnia	
J98.2	Interstitial emphysema	Use additional code to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tobacco dependence (F17.-). • Tobacco use (Z72.0). • History of tobacco dependence (Z87.891). • Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (Z77.22). • Occupational exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (Z57.31).
J98.3	Compensatory emphysema	

Nicotine dependence and tobacco use status

ICD-10 code	Description	Additional character
F17.20-	Nicotine dependence, unspecified	(-) Add 6th character: 0 – uncomplicated 1 – in remission 3 – with withdrawal 8 – with other nicotine-induced disorders 9 – with unspecified nicotine-induced disorders
F17.21-	Nicotine dependence, cigarettes	
F17.22-	Nicotine dependence, chewing tobacco	
F17.29-	Nicotine dependence, other tobacco product	
Z72.0	Tobacco use NOS	
Z87.891	Personal history of nicotine dependence	

1 Diagnosis inaccuracies that are not addressed can result in administrative sanctions and potential financial penalties.

2 "About COPD." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 15 May 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.CDC.gov/COPD/about/>.

3 "About Asthma." CDC. 22 January 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.CDC.gov/asthma/about/index.html>.