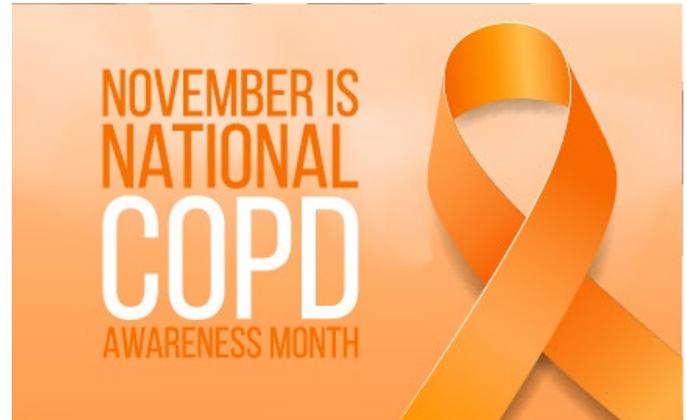# Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Awareness Month

COPD is a common progressive, nonreversible lung disease that restricts airflow and causes breathing problems. COPD includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, COPD affects nearly 16 million Americans and is the fourth-leading cause of death in the United States. The American Lung Association advocates on behalf of COPD patients. It supports increasing coverage and access to pulmonary rehabilitation services and increasing research funding to grow knowledge and awareness of COPD.

Risk Factors

- Smoking (primary cause)
- Long-term exposure to air pollution, workplace chemicals, dust, or fumes
- Long-term exposure to secondhand smoke
- Genetic disorder, alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency (AAT)
- History of frequent childhood respiratory infections
- Condition such as HIV, and tuberculosis can raise the risk

Symptoms

- Cough that sometimes produces mucus
- Shortness of breath especially with physical activity
- Wheezing
- Chest tightness or heaviness
- Fatigue

Treatment

COPD treatment focuses on relieving symptoms and reducing risk of complications and exacerbations. The specific treatment depends on whether the patient has mild or more advanced stage of COPD.

Common treatments include:

- Smoking cessation
- Medications
    - Bronchodilators
    - Inhaled and/or oral steroids
    - Combination inhalers
    - Theophylline
    - Antibiotics
- Oxygen therapy
- Pulmonary rehabilitation program
- In-home noninvasive ventilation therapy

Documentation and Coding Tips

COPD codes are found in ICD-10-CM Chapter 10 Diseases of the respiratory system (J00-J99), Chapter Block J40-J4A Chronic lower respiratory diseases. ICD-10-CM category J44.- Other chronic obstructive pulmonary disease includes the following conditions:

- Asthma with COPD
- Chronic asthmatic (obstructive) bronchitis
- Chronic bronchitis with airway obstruction
- Chronic bronchitis with emphysema
- Chronic emphysematous bronchitis
- Chronic obstructive asthma
- Chronic obstructive bronchitis
- Chronic obstructive tracheobronchitis

Proper documentation for COPD should include the following information:

- The type of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (e.g., emphysema, chronic bronchitis)
- Presence of comorbidities (e.g., asthma, pulmonary hypertension, respiratory failure)
- Presence of exacerbation if present
- Presence of acute lower respiratory infection; identify the infection, as appropriate
- Dependence on ventilator or supplemental oxygen
- Any treatment and diagnostic tests and their implications for the COPD diagnosis

ICD-10 Codes

When the diagnosis is stated only as COPD, assign diagnosis code J44.9, Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, unspecified.

Emphysema without chronic bronchitis is coded to category J43.- Emphysema.

Chronic bronchitis not otherwise specified is coded to J42 Unspecified chronic bronchitis.

ICD-10-CM Updates for Fiscal Year 2024

In June 2023, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced the ICD-10-CM code set update for fiscal year 2024 (effective October 1, 2023). This update adds 395 new codes, deletes 25 existing codes in 17 different chapters, and revises 13 codes titles.

This newsletter features some of the changes from Chapter 10 Diseases of the respiratory system that we believe will interest you most. This is not an all-inclusive list of the changes contained in the update; you can learn more about diagnosis coding for fiscal year 2024 in ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting FY 2024 – UPDATED October 1, 2023.

Chapter 10 Diseases of the Respiratory System (J00-J99)

Seven new diagnosis codes, including codes for Other specified chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

New J44.81 Other specified chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
>   Obliterative bronchiolitis

Code first, if applicable:
>   Complication of bone marrow transplant (T86.09)
>   Complication of stem cell transplant (T86.5)
>   Heart-lung transplant rejection (T86.31)
>   Lung transplant rejection (T86.810)
>   Other complications of heart-lung transplant (T86.39)
>   Other complications of lung transplant (T86.818)

Code also, if applicable, associated conditions, such as:
>   Chronic graft-versus-host disease (D89.811)
>   Chronic lung allograft dysfunction (J4A.-)
>   Chronic respiratory conditions due to chemicals, gases, fumes and vapors (J68.4)

Bronchiolitis obliterans is a condition that affects the bronchioles (small airways in the lungs). This condition can be treated but it cannot be cured. It is one of the common noninfectious complications after lung transplant; other etiologies include inhaled toxins, autoimmune disorders, and patients with HIV.

New J44.89 Other specified chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
>   Chronic asthmatic (obstructive) bronchitis
>   Chronic emphysematous bronchitis

Progressive disease characterized by obstruction of the airway (hard to breathe)

New Guidance for COPD Coexisting with Bronchiectasis

Prior to October 1, 2023, the ICD-10-CM classification indicated that when the medical record shows COPD coexisting with bronchiectasis, assign only a code from category J47.- Bronchiectasis. The most recent update on October 1, 2023, states it is acceptable to code both conditions when they coexist.

New Guidance for COPD Coexisting with Emphysema without Chronic Bronchitis

Prior to October 1, 2023, the ICD-10-CM classification indicated that when the medical record shows COPD coexisting with emphysema without chronic bronchitis, assign only a code from category J43.- Emphysema. The most recent update indicates it is acceptable to code both conditions when they coexist.

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References

- https://www.CDC.gov/COPD/Index.html
- https://www.CDC.gov/MMWR/Volumes/71/WR/MM7149a3.htm
- https://www.NHLBI.NIH.gov/Health/COPD
- https://www.Lung.org/
- https://www.CMS.gov/Medicare/Coding-Billing/ICD-10-Codes/2024-ICD-10-CM

Earn CEUs through Coding Webinars

Did you know Florida Blue offers on-demand webinars that provide detail about how to support diagnoses per Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services guidelines? These courses are updated with current codes and guidelines and are eligible for continuing education unit credits.

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