

March 27, 2020



LATEST COVID-19 INFORMATION



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), the federal agency responsible for use of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10th revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-10-CM) in the United States issued "General Guidance" in February for coding of encounters related to coronavirus. It offered specific codes and sequencing instructions for patients with pneumonia confirmed as due to COVID-19 along with instructions for patient encounters with a diagnosis of acute bronchitis, lower respiratory infections and ARDS. It also addressed gave instructions for patients with exposure and possible exposure. A very detailed document from them that was easy to follow.

At the same time, the CDC released another document indicating that a unique code for the COVID-19 virus was in the works, would be brought to the March Coordination and Communications Meeting for approval and implementation on October 1, 2020.

New April 1 date

The day after President Trump's announcement of sweeping changes to telehealth services, the CDC released another update indicating they were, under the National Emergencies Act, changing the effective date of the new diagnosis code for COVID-19 to **April 1, 2020**. The release indicated full addenda information along with a final title would be released after the March ICD-10 Coordination and Maintenance committee meeting was held.

I offer this background information on the development and use of ICD-10 codes for COVID-19 to avoid confusion. There are three different documents the CDC has released on this subject. Depending on the source for information you may find in researching how to code for the differing scenarios, the instructions may vary and could be incorrect. I am attaching all three documents from the CDC for your reference.

For encounters occurring March 24, 2020 until April 1, 2020, follow the General Guidance given by the CDC in February released documents:

Pneumonia

- Patients with pneumonia, case confirmed as due to the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19), assign
 - J12.89 - Other viral pneumonia
- AND**
- B97.29 - Other coronavirus as the cause of diseases classified elsewhere

Acute Bronchitis

- Patients with acute bronchitis confirmed as due to COVID-19, assign
 - J20.8 - Acute bronchitis due to other specified organisms
- AND**
- B97.29 - Other coronavirus as the cause of diseases classified elsewhere

Bronchitis not otherwise specified (NOS)

- Patients with bronchitis (NOS) due to the COVID-19, assign
 - J40 - Bronchitis, not specified as acute or chronic
- AND**
- B97.29 - Other coronavirus as the cause of diseases classified elsewhere

Respiratory Infection

- Patients with COVID-19 documented as being associated with a lower respiratory infection, not otherwise specified (NOS), or an acute respiratory infection, NOS, assign
 - J22 - Unspecified acute lower respiratory infection
- AND**
- B97.29 - Other coronavirus as the cause of diseases classified elsewhere
- Patients with COVID-19 documented as being associated with a respiratory infection, NOS, assign
 - J98.8 - Other specified respiratory disorders
- AND**
- B97.29 - Other coronavirus as the cause of diseases classified elsewhere

Acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS)

- ARDS may develop in with the COVID-19
 - Patients with ARDS due to COVID-19, assign
 - J80 - Acute respiratory distress syndrome
- AND**
- B97.29 - Other coronavirus as the cause of diseases classified elsewhere

Exposure to COVID-19

- Patients where there is a concern about a possible exposure to COVID-19, but this is ruled out after evaluation, assign
 - Z03.818 - Encounter for observation for suspected exposure to other biological agents ruled out
- Patients where there is an actual exposure to someone who is confirmed to have COVID-19, assign
 - Z20.828 - Contact with and (suspected) exposure to other viral communicable diseases

Signs and symptoms

- Patients presenting with any signs/symptoms (such as fever, etc.) and where a definitive diagnosis has not been established, assign codes for the Signs & Symptoms (S&S)
 - R05 - Cough
 - R06.02 - Shortness of breath
 - R50.9 - Fever, unspecified

For dates of service on and after April 1, 2020, the policy to follow is below:

U07.1 - COVID-19

- Use additional code to identify pneumonia or other manifestations
- Excludes1: Coronavirus infection, unspecified site (B34.2)
Coronavirus as the cause of diseases classified to other chapters (B97.2-)
Severe acute respiratory syndrome [SARS], unspecified (J12.81)

Hopefully, the Committee will also add information to the official ICD-10 guidelines regarding U07.1. This would help clarify questions that have already arisen, including those regarding sequencing, when comparing the coding instructions from last month's CDC release to those presented with the new U07.1 code structure above. We will provide further guidance as soon as it is available.

Article Courtesy of:

*Jill M Young, CPC, CEDC, CIMC
Founder, Young Medical Consulting, LLC*

