

ICD-10 Documentation Tip Sheet

General Changes to ICD-10

The differences in ICD-9 and ICD-10 can be compared to the differences between one language and another. Thankfully, for physicians, the ICD-10 begins to sound a lot more like the language of medicine than ICD-9 did. On the other hand, some of these changes will be more difficult for your staff, and those without a basic knowledge of anatomy and physiology may struggle.

Some things are still in a language unique to coding, however. And some of those sound like nothing you've ever heard:

- The term “of other overlapping sites” is closest to the term “of other specified sites” in ICD-9
- ICD-10 contains two types of “Excludes” notes:
 - Excludes1 means that the excluded code should NEVER be used at the same time as the code above it, because the two conditions cannot occur together. ICD-10 gives a great example- a congenital form versus an acquired form of the same condition.
 - Excludes2 means “not included here”. This means that the excluded condition is not part of the condition represented by the code you're looking at, but the two conditions can occur at the same time. You can code both conditions when both exist.
- Many codes indicate right, left or bilateral. Your documentation should do the same. If there is no bilateral code, and you have documented both right and left, you should code both right and left separately.
- Defaults—
 - If you do not specify type 1 or type 2 diabetes, the ICD-10 indicates type 2 should be used
 - Hemiplegia/hemiparesis; monoplegia—if you indicate right or left without documenting whether it is the dominant or non-dominant side:
 - For ambidextrous patients, the default is dominant
 - If the left side is documented, the default is non-dominant
 - If the right side is documented, the default is dominant
 - Common Abbreviations in ICD-10:

General Changes to ICD-10, continued

- NEC “Not elsewhere classifiable”--This abbreviation in the Tabular List represents “other specified”. When a specific code is not available for a condition the Tabular List includes an NEC entry under a code to identify the code as the “other specified” code.
- NOS “Not otherwise specified” This abbreviation is the equivalent of unspecified.
- “See” and “See Also” notes are indicators that you may be required to use two (or more) codes to fully describe the illness. It’s important that code each condition if they are documented.
- Because laterality is important in ICD-10, always document the side of the body for diagnoses which may be bilateral.
- Document acute or chronic (or acute on chronic) when applicable.
- Always document the type of diabetes (type 1 vs. type 2), and any complications that are due to the diabetes.
- Be sure to document when a fracture occurred, even if this is not the first time you are seeing the patient for the fracture.