

Documentation and Coding Tips

Pathological fractures (non-traumatic)

Pathological fractures describe a fracture that is a result of a medical condition rather than trauma. Fractures in patients with known disease whose injury (i.e. minor fall) would not usually break a normal, healthy bone should not be classified with a traumatic injury code. Upon compliance review, providers often consider these types of fractures to be traumatic when selecting their diagnoses.

When documenting Pathological Fractures, specify the following:

- **Episode of care:**
 - A-Initial encounter for fracture
 - Initial is when the patient is receiving active treatment
 - D-Subsequent encounter for fracture with routine healing
 - G-Subsequent encounter for fracture with delayed healing
 - K-Subsequent encounter for fracture with nonunion
 - P-Subsequent encounter for fracture with malunion
 - Subsequent is after the patient has completed active treatment and is receiving routine care during the healing or recovery phase
 - S-Sequela
 - Late effects of the fracture
- **Identify location and laterality**
- **Specify the type:**
 - Age-related osteoporosis
 - Neoplastic disease
 - Other (i.e. Long-term use of prednisone, menopause, Cushing's syndrome)
- **Diagnostic Tools/Treatment:**
 - List diagnostic procedures and services (i.e. CT scan, DEXA, MRI, x-ray)
 - List therapeutic procedures and services (i.e. physical therapy, restricted activity, and rest)
 - List any medications prescribed

Documentation and Coding Examples

Non-specific documentation example:

Patient presented today after experiencing back pain for two days with no known injury. X-ray revealed compression fractures, T8-T10.

Assign code: M54.9 Back pain NOS. A compression fracture can be pathological, nontraumatic NOS or traumatic. Without more detailed fracture information, the coder cannot report a fracture specific diagnosis.

Specific documentation example:

A patient with age-related osteoporosis suffers a pathological fracture to her right hip after falling off a stool. She is being seen for this new fracture today.

Assign code: M80.051A Age-related osteoporosis with current pathological fracture, right femur.
W08.XXXA Fall from stool.