

## Documentation and Coding Tips

# Respiratory Failure

Respiratory failure is never a single diagnosis; it always has an associated cause. Clinical documentation of cause and sequence of events is fundamental for correct code assignment.

**Specify When Documenting:**

- **Severity:**
  - Acute
  - Chronic
  - Acute and chronic
  - Postprocedural
    - **Do not** document and code respiratory failure when a patient is maintained on a ventilator following surgery when the ventilator is a routine aspect of the surgery.
    - **Do** document and code respiratory failure if there is a complication or chronic condition that requires an extension of ventilator support.
- **Type:**
  - Hypoxemia
  - Hypercapnia
  - Both hypoxemia and hypercapnia
- **Cause:** Any underlying conditions, such as pulmonary embolism, pulmonary hypertension, COPD, fibrosis, injury, pneumonia, surgery
- **Clinical results:** Such as exam findings, arterial blood gas, pulse oximetry, chest x-ray
- **Treatment plan:** Such as oxygen dependence, medication, pulmonary rehabilitation

*Note: Include any related tobacco use, abuse, dependence, past history, or smoke exposure (i.e. second hand, occupational)*

**Documentation and Coding Examples****Non-specific documentation example:**

60-year-old female with chronic respiratory failure. She is dependent upon home O2, good saturation today.

**Assign code:** J96.10-Chronic respiratory failure, unspecified whether with hypoxia or hypercapnia. Z99.81-Oxygen dependence (long-term, supplemental).

**Specific documentation example:**

85-year-old male with acute on chronic respiratory failure due to end-stage pan-lobular emphysema with hypoxia and hypercapnia. He required mechanical ventilation. The patient has a history of tobacco dependence.

**Assign code:** J96.21-Acute and chronic respiratory failure with hypoxia, J96.22-Acute and chronic respiratory failure with hypercapnia, J43.1-Panlobular emphysema, Z99.11-Dependence on respiratory (ventilator) status, Z87.891-Personal history of nicotine dependence.