

Z Code (Z00 – Z99) Coding Guidelines

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Problem and Goal

Problem

- Providing a Z code that can only be reported as a secondary diagnosis without also documenting a first-listed diagnosis.

Goal

- To provide a general understanding of ICD-10 coding guidelines for reporting Z codes in order for TriCore to receive all diagnosis codes that accurately describe the patient's condition.

What Are Z Codes?

- Z codes represent reasons for specific encounters and are found in Chapter 21 of ICD-10.
- Certain Z codes may only be reported as the first-listed diagnosis and should never be reported in any position other than the primary position.
- Some Z codes cannot be first-listed.
- Other Z codes may be used as either a first-listed or secondary diagnosis, depending on the circumstances of the encounter.

Use of Z Codes

- Z codes (other reasons for healthcare encounters) may be assigned as appropriate to further explain the reason for presenting for healthcare services, including transfers between healthcare facilities. The ICD-10 Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting identify which codes may be assigned as first-listed or secondary (depending on the circumstances).
- Assign as many codes as necessary to fully explain the healthcare encounter.

Commonly Reported Categories of Z Codes

- Contact/Exposures
- Status
- History of
- Screening
- Observation
- Encounters for obstetrical and reproductive services
- Newborns and infants
- Routine and administrative examinations
- Miscellaneous Z codes
- Nonspecific Z codes
- Z Codes that may only be first-listed

Examples Of Z Codes That Are First-Listed

- Z00 Encounter for general examination without complaint, suspected or reported diagnosis
Except: Z00.6 Encounter for examination for normal comparison and control in clinical research program.
- Z01 Encounter for other special examination without complaint, suspected or reported diagnosis.
- Z02 Encounter for administrative examination
- Z03 Encounter for medical observation for suspected diseases and conditions ruled out
- Z04 Encounter for examination and observation for other reasons
- Z33.2 Encounter for elective termination of pregnancy
- Z31.81 Encounter for male factor infertility in female patient
- Z31.82 Encounter for Rh incompatibility status
- Z31.84 Encounter for fertility preservation procedure
- Z34 Encounter for supervision of normal pregnancy
- Z39 Encounter for maternal postpartum care and examination
- Z76.1 Encounter for health supervision and care of foundling
- Z76.2 Encounter for health supervision and care of other healthy infant and child

Note: Except when there are multiple encounters on the same day and the medical records for the encounter are combined.

This is not an all-inclusive list of first-listed Z codes.

These are examples only and TriCore does not encourage use of these codes unless they describe the patient's condition and are documented in the patient's chart.

Examples Of Z Codes That Cannot Be First-Listed

- **Pregnant state, incidental** (Z33.1) cannot be first-listed as per the description of the code it is *incidental* to the reason why the patient was seen. A diagnosis for the circumstances of the encounter should be listed first.
- **Weeks of gestation** (Z3A.00 – Z3A.49) requires a diagnosis from Chapter 15 Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Puerperium.
- **BMI** (Z68.20 – Z68.54) should only be assigned when the associated diagnosis (such as overweight or obesity) meets the definition of reportable diagnosis.

This is not an all-inclusive list of all Z codes that cannot be first-listed.

These are examples only and TriCore does not encourage use of these codes unless they describe the patient's condition and are documented in the patient's chart.

Medicare

- Will not pay a laboratory claim if a non-covered diagnosis is reported according to Medicare's National Coverage Determinations (NCD) policy and Local Coverage Determinations (LCD).
- Commonly reported non-covered Z codes
 - Z00.00
 - Z02.79
 - Z02.89
 - Z02.9
 - Z11.3
 - Z11.4
 - Z11.59
 - Z13.220
 - Z13.89
 - Z13.9

This is not an all-inclusive list of non-covered Z codes. Please check the NCD's/LCD's for a full list of codes.

These are examples only and TriCore does not encourage use of these codes unless they describe the patient's condition and are documented in the patient's chart.

Resources

- ICD-10-CM Coding Guidelines FY 2020 (October 1, 2019 - September 30, 2020)
<https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Coding/ICD10/Downloads/2020-Coding-Guidelines.pdf>
- ICD-10-CM Coding Book
<https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Coding/ICD10/2020-ICD-10-CM>
- CMS NCD
<https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Coverage/CoverageGenInfo/LabNCDsICD10>