Human immunodeficiency virus

Documentation and coding: Individual & Family Plans

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For coding education questions, email CignaHealthcareHCPEducation@CignaHealthcare.com.

It's important to accurately document and code diagnoses when submitting claims for your patients with Cigna Healthcare-administered coverage. This helps ensure your diagnosis and coding practices comply with all applicable legal requirements,[1] while enabling us to provide our customers with the benefits and resources they need. For additional information and resources, visit the Cigna Healthcare Individual & Family Plans page at CignaforHCP.com/IFP.

The information that follows is designed to provide guidance for the documentation and coding of claims for your patients with a diagnosis of HIV. It is not meant to replace your judgment when caring for your patients.

Definitions and criteria

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a chronic disease that weakens the immune system by destroying cells that help protect against disease and infection. If not treated, it can lead to acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).[2]

Contact/exposure:
- Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) reduces the chances of getting HIV from sex or injection drug use.
- Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) emergency medication is recommended to prevent HIV after possible exposure.[2]
- Type 2 HIV (HIV 2) has the same clinical features as HIV except for a difference in nucleotides and amino acids – most marked with envelope genes and proteins.[3]

AIDS is the ongoing chronic condition caused by HIV. Most people in the United States don't get AIDS due to early treatment of HIV.[4]

Documentation and coding

- Capture HIV diagnosis based on the International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision (ICD-10-CM) nomenclature, when provider diagnostic statement states symptomatic or asymptomatic with a treatment plan (monitor, medication, referral, education, etc.).
- Assign code Z21 (asymptomatic HIV virus infection status) for documentation of HIV or HIV positive without documentation of HIV disease, HIV-related illness, or AIDS.[5]
- Include either symptomatic or asymptomatic in the diagnostic statement for best practice documentation.[5]
- Use code B20 for symptomatic HIV disease.[5]
- Use additional diagnostic statements to describe comorbid conditions or medical complications (e.g., dementia, depression, pregnancy, childbirth, opportunistic infections) of HIV infection/disease.
- Only assign an ICD-10-CM code for confirmed cases of HIV. HIV is the exception to the "uncertain diagnosis" ICD-10-CM guideline. "Suspected," "probable," "likely," and other uncertain verbiage in the inpatient setting do not warrant assigning a code for HIV.
- Do not assign code B20 or Z21 to newborns with HIV antibodies prior to 18 months of age. Assign code R75 for newborns aged 0 days–18 months born of an HIV-positive mother.
- Code long-term use of antiretroviral medications.

ICD-10 code	Description	Additional character(s)	Documentation and coding tips
B20	• HIV • AIDS • AIDS-related complex • HIV infection, symptomatic • HIV disease managed on antiretroviral medications6		
B97.35	Type 2 HIV		
D59.31	Infection-associated hemolytic-uremic syndrome (HUS)		
F02.80	Dementia in HIV		Code first B20.
F02.81-	Behavioral disturbance in HIV	(-) Add 5th and 6th character(s) 11 – agitation 18 – other behavioral 2 – psychotic disturbance 3 – mood disturbance 4 – anxiety	Code first B20.
O98.7-	HIV complicating pregnancy, childbirth, and puerperium	(-) Add 5th and 6th character(s) 11 – first trimester 12 – second trimester 13 – third trimester 2 – childbirth 3 – puerperium	Code also B20 or Z21.
R75	• Inconclusive laboratory evidence of HIV • Nonconclusive HIV test finding in infants		
Z20.6	• Exposure to HIV virus		
Z21	• Asymptomatic HIV status • HIV positive • HIV test positive • Without documentation of HIV disease with current symptoms.[6]		
Z29.81	• Encounter for HIV PrEP		Code also contact/ exposure with HIV virus (Z20.06).
Z71.7	• Counseling for HIV status		
Z72.5-	• High-risk sexual behavior		
Z79.899	• Long-term use of antiretroviral medications[6]		

1 Diagnosis inaccuracies that are not addressed can result in administrative sanctions and potential financial penalties.
2 "Preventing HIV with PEP." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 25 January 2024. Retrieved from https://www.CDC.gov/hiv/prevention/pep.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/pep/about-pep.html.
3 A. Hughes, et al. "Human immunodeficiency virus type 2 (HIV2)." September 1990. National Library of Medicine. Retrieved from https://Pubmed.NCBI.NLM.NIH.gov/2245251.
4 "HIV/AIDS." Mayo Clinic. 02 February 2024. Retrieved from https://www.MayoClinic.org/diseases-conditions/hiv-aids/symptoms-causes/syc-203735244.
5 AHA Coding Clinic 2022, Q1, Volume 9, number 1, Page 36.
6 AHA Coding Clinic 2021, Q4, Volume 8, number 4, Page 81.