

Medicare Risk Adjustment Coding Focus

Seizure Disorders



Overview

Seizures occur when there are excessive electrical discharges in brain cells that disrupt normal function. There are several different types of seizures with varying ranges of severity. The specific type of seizure is determined by how and where it originates in the brain.¹

According to the American Epilepsy Society, 1 in 26 people will develop epilepsy or recurring seizures in their lifetime. Approximately 3 million people in the United States have epilepsy.²

Types and Symptoms

The signs and symptoms of a seizure can vary greatly and may be mild to severe, depending on the type of seizure. Seizures are usually classified as either focal (or partial) or generalized, depending on the part of the brain effected.

Typical symptoms of a seizure may include:³

- Loss of awareness or consciousness
- Temporary confusion
- Staring
- Uncontrollable movements of the legs and arms

- Emotional or cognitive symptoms such as anxiety

Causes

There are many different causes for seizures, some of which include serious head trauma, drug or alcohol intoxication, fever, stroke, and metabolic disturbances. Epilepsy is a brain disease that predisposes a person to experience recurrent unprovoked strokes. Additionally, genetics may play a role as people who have a family history of seizures or epilepsy may be at a higher risk.

Tests and Treatment

There are varieties of tests that can be performed to determine the cause of a seizure and will help indicate the likelihood of reoccurrence. Blood tests, a neurological exam, and lumbar punctures can help to diagnose any infections, metabolic imbalances, or genetic conditions. An electroencephalogram (EEG) provides details regarding any patterns to seizure activity. Computerized tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and positron emission tomography (PET) scans can reveal the presence of any lesions or abnormalities.

Depending on the cause, treatment options can include anti-seizure medications, surgical intervention, neurostimulation, and dietary therapies to improve seizure control.

Coding Guidance

Diagnosis codes for epilepsy and recurrent seizures are located in chapter

6 of the ICD-10-CM codebook⁴. These codes contain extensive detail regarding the location, cause, and severity of epileptic convulsions and seizures. Diagnosis codes for convulsions that are not classified as epileptic in nature are located in chapter 18. The medical record will need to include specific details regarding the cause and type of seizure for correct code assignment.

Seizure Disorders and Convulsions (HCC 79)

G40.* - Epilepsy and recurrent seizures

***Requires additional characters to indicate localization-related, generalized, absence, juvenile myoclonic, external causes, intractable or not intractable and with or without status epilepticus**

R56.00 - Simple febrile convulsions**
R56.01 - Complex febrile convulsions**
R56.1 - Post traumatic seizures**
R56.9 - Unspecified convulsions**

****Excludes epileptic convulsions and seizures (G40.*)**

Resources:

¹ Mayo Clinic (n.d.). Seizures. Accessed November 19, 2018 from mayoclinic.org

² American Epilepsy Society (2018). Facts and Figures. Accessed November 19, 2018 from aesnet.org

³ Cedars-Sinai (2018). Generalized Seizures. Accessed November 19, 2018 from cedars-sinai.edu

⁴ Schmidt, A., & Patterson, L. (2018). ICD-10-CM Professional for Physicians. Salt Lake City: OPTUM360.