

## Ulcers

### Risk Adjustment Coding Guide

Ulcers are associated with HCC coding, while wounds are not. Please note that the two conditions are not synonymous. **Wounds are due to trauma or surgery, while ulcers are caused by skin breakdown from pressure or other chronic conditions.**

When known, it is important to document and code the condition that is causing the ulcer, such as PVD or diabetes.

#### Pressure/Decubitus Ulcers

Be sure to document:

**Location/Laterality** – What part of the body is affected

**Stage** –

- Stage I – Pre-ulcer skin changes limited to persistent focal erythema
- Stage II – Pressure ulcer with abrasion, blister, partial thickness skin loss involving epidermis and/or dermis
- Stage III – Pressure ulcer with full thickness skin loss involving damage or necrosis of subcutaneous tissue
- Stage IV – Pressure ulcer with necrosis of soft tissues through to underlying muscle, tendon, or bone
- Unstageable – ulcer covered by eschar or that has been treated with skin or other graft

A provider must establish a pressure ulcer diagnosis, however a nurse or other clinician can document a pressure ulcer stage. When pressure ulcers are associated with gangrene or gangrenous cellulitis, code I96 for gangrene should be reported first.

#### Diabetic Ulcers

Code diabetes code first (diabetes with foot ulcer or diabetes with other skin ulcer). Code ulcer second. Be sure to document:

**Location/Laterality**- What part of the body is affected

**Stage** –

- Limited to breakdown of skin
- Fat layer exposed
- Necrosis of muscle
- Necrosis of bone
- Muscle involvement without evidence of necrosis
- Bone involvement without evidence of necrosis

#### Other Ulcers

**Stasis Ulcer (with Varicose Veins)** - Indicate location/laterality and whether inflammation is present.

**Arterial Ulcer (Atherosclerosis)** – Indicate location/laterality

**Does your documentation have MEAT? (Monitor, Evaluate, Assess, Treat)**

**All HCC diagnoses must be documented and coded at least once per year**