

## Dermatology Coding Alert

### Reader Questions: Biofreeze or Cryotherapy?

Question: A patient came to the office with a bump on her foot; the dermatologist diagnosed viral warts. Case notes document "biofreeze x 1." How should we code the procedure?

West Virginia Subscriber

Answer: Biofreeze is the same as cryotherapy, so report 17110 (Destruction [e.g., laser surgery, electrocautery, cryosurgery, chemosurgery, surgical curettage], of benign lesions other than skin tags or cutaneous vascular proliferative lesions; up to 14 lesions).

Tip: Insurance companies often classify wart removal as a cosmetic procedure unless the warts cause pain. Because of this stance, payers often will not reimburse for wart destruction without prior authorization.

Caution: Don't be tempted to submit 17000 (Destruction [e.g., laser surgery, electrocautery, cryosurgery, chemosurgery, surgical curettage], premalignant lesions [e.g., actinic keratoses]; first lesion) for wart removal. Warts don't qualify as "pre-malignant lesions" described by 17000.

-- Technical and coding advice for You Be the Coder and Reader Questions provided by **Pamela Biffle, CPC, CPCM, CPC-I, CCS-P, CHCC, CHCO**, owner of PB Healthcare Consulting and Education Inc. in Watauga, Texas.