

Dermatology Coding Alert

You Be the Coder: Destruction of Plantar Wart

Question: Which code should I use for cryotherapy treatment of a common or plantar wart on the skin: 17000 or 17110? Does sending the samples to a pathologist change the coding?

Florida Subscriber

Answer: Although 17110 (Destruction, of flat warts, molluscum contagiosum, or milia; up to 14 lesions) has the word "warts" in the description, it is not the most accurate code to use in this case. In fact, in a parenthetical instruction after 17111, CPT states, "For destruction of common or plantar warts, see 17000, 17003, 17004."

Accordingly, report 17000 (Destruction, all benign or premalignant lesions other than skin tags or cutaneous vascular proliferative lesions; first lesion) for common or plantar wart removal. The destruction of multiple warts may result in greater payment.

Warts are usually removed by destruction as described in codes 17000-17250. The methods of treatment include cryosurgery, laser, chemical treatment and electrosurgery.

The physician needs to document the specific type of wart removed, in this case a common or plantar wart, because that determination may affect reimbursement. Sending the samples to a pathologist does not change the coding.