

## Internal Medicine Coding Alert

### Reader Question: Obtain Specific Diagnosis Before Coding Tissue Infection

Question: Our physician treated a soft-tissue infection on a patient's finger. Which diagnosis code should we report for this?

Maine Subscriber

Answer: The correct choice depends on the type of infection and ICD-9 includes a number of specific options. If the physician described cellulitis to the skin on the finger, you should report one of the following codes: 681.00 (Cellulitis and abscess of finger and toe; finger; cellulitis and abscess, unspecified), 681.01 (... felon), 681.02 (... Onychia and paronychia of finger).

If the physician treated an infection to a soft tissue other than the skin, you could report 728.89 (Other disorders of muscle, ligament, and fascia; other).

If the infection is bacterial in nature, you should use a code from the 041.xx series (Bacterial infection in conditions classified elsewhere and of unspecified site) as a secondary diagnosis to indicate the nature of the infection.

And, if the infection is of unknown origin or cannot be classified into these categories, you might consider 686.9 (Unspecified local infection of skin and subcutaneous tissue).

If the documentation does not reveal the type of infection or how deep it was, you should ask your physician for more details.