

Internal Medicine Coding Alert

You Be The Coder: Cut Through a Trio of Lesion-Excision Codes

Question: Our internist saw a patient with lesions on his face and cheek. He excised a 2.6-centimeter benign lesion on the patient's chin and a 3.1-centimeter benign lesion from the patient's cheek. The internist then closed the wounds with a layered closure. How should I report this visit?

California Subscriber

Answer: You would report a trio of codes. For the lesion excisions, report 11443 (Excision, other benign lesion including margins [unless listed elsewhere], face, ears, eyelids, nose, lips, mucous membrane; excised diameter 2.1 cm to 3.0 cm) and 11444 (... excised diameter 3.1 cm to 4.0 cm). Code the layer closure with 12053 (Layer closure of wounds of face, ears, eyelids, nose, lips and/or mucous membranes; 5.1 cm to 7.5 cm).

Most lesion removals require suture closure, and the surgical package includes simple closures. But if the physician performs a layered closure, you can report it separately.

Report the layer closures by adding the lengths of the two closures together and using the appropriate code.

If the lesions were excised in different anatomic areas and both required layered closure, you would report two separate codes for the closures.