Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Part B Coding Coach: 3 Steps Help You Translate Your Hysterectomy Claims into Common Sense

Find out why knowing the weight of the uterus is so important.
Don't just correct your hysterectomy claims -- perfect them by narrowing down your possible coding choices. By following these three steps, you'll find the right hysterectomy code every time.
Key: According to **Donna C. Kroening, CPC, COBGC,** reimbursement manager for the department of obstetrics and gynecology at the Medical College of Wisconsin, when you code hysterectomies, you'll have to review these factors in this order:

- approach
- size/weight
- extent of uterus removed
- additional procedures performed.

Step 1: Analyze Your Ob-gyn's Approach
First, you need to decide what approach your ob-gyn used. This will help you narrow down the code series you'll work with.
Open procedures: For a hysterectomy performed via the abdominal approach, you should look to 58150-58240. If your ob-gyn performed a hysterectomy using a vaginal approach, you'll pull a code from the 58260-58294 series.
Laparoscopic procedure: For a laparoscopic-assisted vaginal hysterectomy (LAVH), you'll use 58550-58554. If your ob-gyn performed a supracervical laparoscopic hysterectomy, you'll report one of four codes: 58541-58544. And if your physician performed a total laparoscopic hysterectomy look to codes 58570-58573.
Why this is so important: You'll find a big difference between laparoscopic hysterectomies and ones performed through a laparotomy incision -- hence, higher relative value units (RVUs) and expected reimbursement for the open procedures.
Step 2: Seek Out the Uterus' Size
Next, you need to know the weight of the uterus -- specifically whether it was 250 grams or less or more than 250 grams. This will narrow your coding options.
If the uterus weighed 250 grams or less, you'll use 58260-58270 for vaginal approach procedures. You'll use 58550-58552 or 58570-58571 if your ob-gyn used a laparoscopic approach or 58541-58542 if she performed a supracervical laparoscopic hysterectomy.
On the other hand, if the uterus weighed more than 250 grams, you'll use 58290-58294 for vaginal approach procedures. You'll use 58553-58554 or 58572-58573 if the procedure was laparoscopic or 58543-58544 if the procedure was a supracervical laparoscopic hysterectomy.
Why this is so important: "Without knowing the weight of the uterus, you could be leaving money on the table," Kroening says. "Be certain that your pathology report includes that. We've worked hard with our pathology department to make certain the weight is always there."
Step 3: Evaluate the Hysterectomy's Extent
An open or laparoscopic hysterectomy may have included more than simply removing the uterus.
The hysterectomy may be total, but you may also see a subtotal open hysterectomy, which you would code using 58180 (Supracervical abdominal hysterectomy [subtotal hysterectomy], with or without removal of tube[s], with or without removal of ovary[s]). This procedure involves removing the uterus (fundus) but leaving the cervix by transecting the uterus slightly below the internal os.
If you're dealing with a supracervical hysterectomy, you should know that this refers to a hysterectomy in which your ob-gyn removes the uterus without taking the cervix.
Watch out: You cannot code the removal of the tubes and/or ovaries separately when the code description states "with or without removal of tubes and ovaries." In addition, you cannot code for fibroid removal when your ob-gyn removes the

uterus -- no matter how he removes it.

Try This Example

Now that you've reviewed how to find hysterectomy codes, try your hand with this example.

Question: How would you code a vaginal hysterectomy for a uterus weighing less than 250 grams, without removal of tubes and ovaries?

Step 1: Because this is a vaginal hysterectomy, you'll be looking at 58260-58294.

Step 2: Of these codes, only 58260-58270 represent a uterus less than 250 grams.

Step 3: The extent of this procedure did not include tube and ovary removal. Therefore, your code is 58260 (Vaginal hysterectomy, for uterus 250 grams or less). Had this example included an additional procedure, such as an enterocele repair or a colpourethrocystopexy, your hysterectomy coding would change.