

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Terminology Check: Brush Up on These Familiar Neck Dissection Terms

Understanding anatomy always helps you code more accurately.

Because neck dissections can involve a wide range of anatomic structures, you'll better understand your surgeon's service if you keep these key terms in mind.

- **Lymph node:** A knot or swelling at various spots along the circulation of the lymph system; the lymph system to maintain fluid balance by returning fluid from the spaces between tissues back to the blood stream and supports the immune system.
- **Lymphadenectomy:** Surgical removal of one or more groups of lymph nodes; it is also called a lymph node dissection.
- **Laryngectomy:** A surgical procedure that removes the larynx, or voice box.
- **Glossectomy:** Surgical removal of the entire tongue; the surgeon also may perform a tracheostomy to insert an artificial airway to help the patient breathe post-procedure. Surgeons most often perform glossectomy to treat cancer.
- **Sternocleidomastoid muscle:** A long muscle in the side of the neck that extends up from the thorax to the base of the skull behind the ear. When the sternocleidomastoid on one side contracts, the face is turned to the opposite side. When both muscles contract, the head is bent toward the chest.
- **Spinal accessory nerve:** The nerve responsible for the motor innervation of the sternocleidomastoid and trapezius muscles. Also called the accessory nerve, it is the eleventh cranial nerve (CN XI) and is composed of two parts, the cranial part and the spinal part.
- **Jugular vein:** These veins in the neck drain blood from the head, brain, face, and neck and move it toward the heart. The internal jugular vein collects blood from the brain, the outside of the face and the neck; the external jugular vein collects most of the blood from the outside of the skull and the deep parts of the face.