

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

When Is a Screening Colonoscopy High-Risk?

Keep track of anniversaries to avoid low-risk screening denials

When can you bill for a high-risk screening colonoscopy (G0105) instead of a regular screening colonoscopy ([G0121](#))?

There are certain circumstances that Medicare considers high-risk when it comes to colon cancer. They include:

1. a close relative, such as sibling, parent or child, has had colorectal cancer or an adenomatous polyp
2. a family history of familial adenomatous polyposis
3. a family history of hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer
4. a personal history of adenomatous polyps
5. a personal history of colorectal cancer
6. inflammatory bowel disease including Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis.

"In the absence of those diagnoses or conditions, a screening colonoscopy would not be considered high-risk," says **Carol Pohlig**, a coder with the department of medicine at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania.

If a patient doesn't qualify for a high-risk screening colonoscopy, you've got another tricky tracking problem, Pohlig says. Non-high-risk patients only receive screenings every 10 years, so "unless you've been following this patient yourself, it's very difficult to have that 10-year information."