

Outpatient Facility Coding Alert

Reader Question: Code Your Urine Collection With 99000 In Some Instances

Question: A patient came in for drug screening. Urine was collected. Should I code 99000 for collection of urine for drug screening at the lab? Do I need to add the nurse code?

Oklahoma Subscriber

Answer: Code 99000 (Handling and/or conveyance of specimen for transfer from the office to a laboratory) is reported when the physician incurs costs to handle and/or transport a specimen to the laboratory (e.g., via messenger service). 99000 is also intended to reflect the work involved in the preparation of a specimen prior to sending it to the laboratory. Typical work involved in this preparation may include:

- centrifuging a specimen
- separating serum
- labeling tubes
- packing the specimens for transport
- filling out lab forms and supplying necessary insurance information and other documentation

However, if the specimen is picked up by laboratory staff at no additional cost to the physician, it would not be appropriate to report CPT® code 99000. It would not be appropriate to report 99211 (Office or other outpatient visit for the evaluation and management of an established patient, that may not require the presence of a physician or other qualified health care professional ...) simply for the collection alone.