

## Home Health ICD-9/ICD-10 Alert

### Reader Question: How Long Can A Surgical Wound Be Non-Healing?

**Question:** How long can we use the code for non-healing surgical wound (998.83)? We've cared for some patients whose wounds weren't infected and were not fistulas, but took longer than the initial episode to heal. Some were non-traumatic amputations and some were surgery to treat cancer or other diseases. A wound care specialist and the patient's physician are involved, and the wound still remains the focus of our care as we recertify the patient for another episode.

We've been using 998.83 (Other specified complications of procedures, not elsewhere classified; non-healing surgical wound) as the primary diagnosis in the recert. Is this the most appropriate code?

**Answer:** Continue to code the wound as non-healing as long as it has no other complications, and it is still non-healing, explains consultant **Lynda Dilts-Benson** with St. Petersburg, FL-based **Reingruber & Co.** Consult with the physician about reasons behind the wound's failure to heal - such as diabetic circulatory complications, peripheral vascular disease, etc. If in fact an underlying condition is causing the delay in healing, you must code that condition as well, she adds.