

Home Health ICD-9/ICD-10 Alert

Reader Questions: Understand The Rule Of Nines

Category 948 is useful any time there are third degree burns or extensive second degree burns. Remember that third degree burns are often surrounded by second degree burns and the guidelines state to only code the highest degree burns of each local site. So there often is no way to show that a larger percentage of the body sustained burns other than with a code from the 948 category.

Category 948 is based on the classic "rule of nines" in estimating body surface involved: head and neck are assigned 9 percent, each arm 9 percent, each leg 18 percent, the anterior trunk 18 percent, posterior trunk 18 percent, and genitalia 1 percent.

Providers may change these body surface percentage assignments where necessary to accommodate infants and children who have proportionately larger heads than adults and patients who have large buttocks, thighs, or abdomens that have burns.

Unless otherwise indicated, reader questions were answered by **Lisa Selman-Holman, JD, BSN, RN, HCS-D, COS-C**, consultant and principal of **Selman-Holman & Associates** in Denton, TX.