

MDS Alert

Reader Question: Dehydration Versus Volume Depletion

Question: What is the difference between 276.50 (Volume depletion, unspecified) and 276.51 (Dehydration)?

Answer: The terms "volume depletion" and "dehydration" are often used synonymously but are actually different conditions. Dehydration refers to water loss that leads to intracellular water deficit due to disturbance in water metabolism. Volume depletion refers to a decline in extracellular fluid volume due to the loss of sodium and water. Volume depletion can be produced by salt and water loss (as with vomiting, diarrhea, diuretics, bleeding) or by water loss alone (as with dehydration). Because of the complexity of these two conditions, it is best to ask the physician to clarify whether to code one or both of these conditions.

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