

OASIS Alert

Education; Here's How To Spot Fully Healed Wounds

Remember: Scabs no longer indicate a non-healing wound.

All home health agencies must know the difference between a surgical wound and a lesion -- or risk inaccurate outcomes and lower payment.

A wound is fully healed and not reportable as a current surgical wound four weeks after complete epithelialization and there are no signs or symptoms of infection, according to the **Wound Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society (WOCN)**. The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** accepts this definition and uses it to determine how to code M0482.

Coding decision: If your patient's incision is clean, dry and completely closed without any signs of infection, you should not report it as a wound for M0482. The scar left from that wound should be reported as lesion for M0440, according to a July 2008 clarification on the **OASIS Certificate and Competency Board (OCCB)**.

However, if an incision is still healing, it should be coded as a surgical wound, explains wound care consultant **Patti Johnston** with Woodlands, TX-based **Healthcare Quality Solutions**. Signs that an incision is still healing include partial epithelialization, a non-granulating wound bed, incisional separation and signs or symptoms of infection, among others.

Caution: Previously, WOCN considered the presence of a scab as an indicator of a non-healing surgical wound. The group has retracted that guidance, which means the presence of a scab is not enough to report a wound as not healing (see OASIS Alert Vol. 9, No. 8 for more information).

Note: View wound descriptions at www.wocn.org or read OCCB's clarification at www.oasiscertificate.org.