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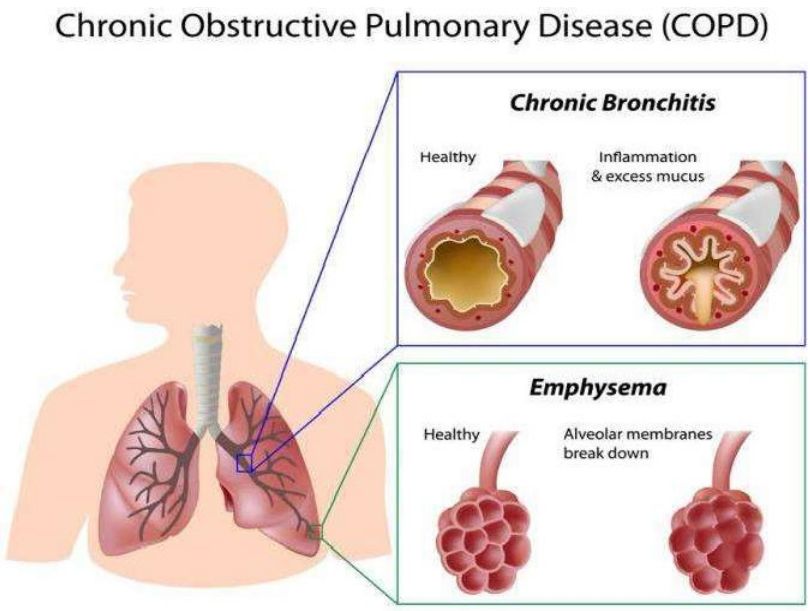
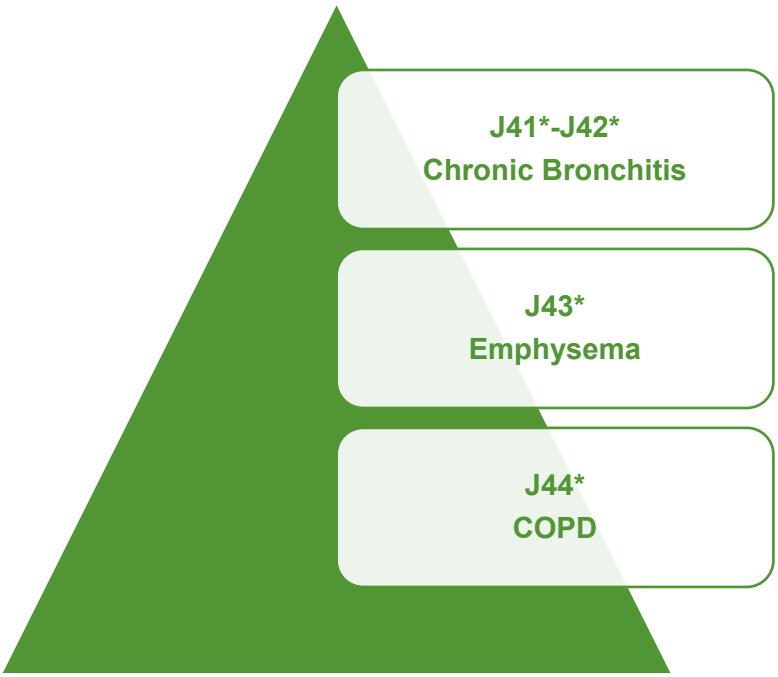
# Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

At Healthfirst, we are committed to helping providers accurately document and code their patients' health records. This tip sheet is intended to assist providers and coding staff with the documentation and on services submitted to Healthfirst-specifically for **Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).** It provides information from industry sources about proper coding practice. However, this document does not represent or guarantee that Healthfirst will cover and/or pay for services outlined. Coverage decisions are based on the terms of the applicable evidence of coverage and the provider's participation agreement. This includes the determination of any amounts that Healthfirst or the member owes the provider.

Emphysema and chronic bronchitis are the two most common conditions that contribute to COPD. These two conditions usually occur together and can vary in severity among individuals with COPD.






*Requires fourth digit to complete the diagnosis code

## Clinical documentation should include:

- Updated status of COPD (stable, improved, and/or worsening)
- Document to the highest level of specificity of COPD diagnosis and associated conditions
- Diagnostic tests (Optional: Pulmonary function test [PFT], Pulse oximetry, Chest X-ray), pulmonary referral, treatment
- Home Oxygen Therapy (**Z99.81** - Dependence on supplemental oxygen) is often used in COPD
- Document a clear and concise treatment plan for COPD, linking related medications to the diagnosis
- As per AHA Coding Clinic, COPD is a chronic and lifelong condition. Providers should document the COPD diagnosis in the final assessment as a current or coexisting condition.
- While COPD is a chronic condition, it is common for patients to experience an acute exacerbation (acute on chronic event) of COPD. This is defined as a sudden experience of worsening symptoms.
- When coding emphysema, COPD, bronchitis, and obstructive asthma, an additional code should be used to identify any exposure to tobacco smoke, history of tobacco use, tobacco dependence, or current tobacco use, where applicable.

## Coding Tips

- Decompensated COPD is the worsening or acute exacerbation of a chronic condition; therefore, documentation of decompensated COPD is interpreted to mean acute on chronic exacerbation.
- Category **J44**, Other COPD, include terms i.e. Asthma with COPD, Chronic asthmatic (obstructive) bronchitis, Chronic emphysematous bronchitis, Chronic bronchitis.
- When emphysema with COPD is documented, emphysema is reported (**J43.9**), since emphysema is a more specific form of COPD.
- When asthma with COPD exacerbation is documented, code both the conditions **J45.909** -Asthma NOS and **J44.1** - COPD with (acute) exacerbation.
- If the COPD exacerbation is in the setting of COPD with acute bronchitis, both code **J44.0** and code **J44.1** may be reported when appropriate.
- Acute bronchitis is not equivalent to acute exacerbation; it is a separate condition. **J44.0**, COPD with acute lower respiratory infection, is not included in **J44.1** - COPD with (acute) exacerbation.
- For code **J43**, Emphysema, if clinically relevant with supporting documentation, you can also code **J68.4** emphysema due to inhalation of chemicals, gases, fumes or vapors
- For code **J44**, Other chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, if clinically relevant with supporting documentation you can also code **J41** chronic simple and mucopurulent bronchitis and **J42** chronic bronchitis NOS, chronic tracheitis, and chronic tracheobronchitis
- For code **J42**, Unspecified chronic bronchitis, code also, if applicable, chronic respiratory conditions due to chemicals, gases, fumes and vapors (**J68.4**)

## Coding Example

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| **Case** | How should COPD and emphysema be coded when both are documented and supported in the medical record? |
| **AHA Coding Clinic {Volume 4, Fourth Quarter 2017)** | Since emphysema is a form of COPD, it is not appropriate to assign a code for "unspecified" COPD in addition to code **J43.9.** The advice published in Coding Clinic regarding COPD and emphysema was based on the current structure of the classification. Assign code **J34.9,** Emphysema, unspecified. Emphysema is a specific type of COPD. The indexing for these conditions is as follows:<br>Disease<br>• lung **J98.4**<br>• obstructive (chronic) **J44.9**<br>with<br>• emphysema **J43.9** |

## References


- ICD-10-CM Official Coding Guidelines FY 2027
- codingclinicadvisor.com
- AAPC.com


## Questions?

Contact us at #Risk_Adjustments_and_clinical_Documentation@healthfirst.org.

For additional documentation and coding guidance, please visit the coding section on

HFproviders.org

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