

CODING CORNER

Code for counseling parents on harms of secondhand smoke

from the AAP Division of Health Care Finance and Quality Improvement

Appropriate coding for services related to exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke and tobacco use is an important first step in obtaining fair reimbursement. The following cases illustrate opportunities to include tobacco use or exposure in your coding and treatment "matrix."

Case 1. A newborn and her parents come in for her first well-child visit. The pregnancy and delivery were without complications. Both mother and father smoked prior to the pregnancy. In the fourth month of the pregnancy, the mother quit smoking and the father started smoking outside. Both parents began smoking in the home after the delivery.

As part of the anticipatory guidance/risk factor reduction component of the preventive medicine service, you spend two to three minutes counseling both parents on the harms of secondhand smoke to their newborn and provide resources for smoking cessation.

Diagnosis code	Procedure code
V20.2 – Routine infant or child health check	99381 – Preventive medicine service, new patient (age under 1 year)
V15.89 – Other specified personal history presenting hazards to health (exposure to tobacco smoke as a potential risk)	Time spent counseling included in preventive medicine service, not reported separately.

Case 2. The newborn is now 6 months old and comes in for a sick visit because she has been coughing a lot. Mother and father tried to quit but relapsed and are smoking in their bedroom because it's cold outside (the infant does not sleep with them). After diagnosing bronchiolitis in the infant, you spend an additional five minutes counseling both parents on the harms of secondhand smoke to their infant and encourage them to try to quit again. You provide resources for smoking cessation.

Diagnosis code	Procedure code
466.11 – Acute bronchiolitis due to respiratory syncytial virus	99213 (based on appropriate E/M documentation)
V15.89 – Other specified personal history presenting hazards to health (exposure to tobacco smoke as a potential risk)	Higher level E/M code can be reported only if face-to-face counseling exceeds 50% of documented total visit time.

Case 3. Over the next year, the infant develops asthma, demonstrating a pattern of recurrent wheezing, exacerbated by viral upper respiratory infection triggers and exposure to secondhand smoke. The parents have reduced their smoking and attempt to limit smoking to outside the house. The child now presents with acute coughing and wheezing that is triggered by smoke exposure at a family party where in-house smoking occurred. You treat the child's acute asthma exacerbation in your office, again educating the family about the link between secondhand smoke exposure and increased childhood reactive airway symptoms.

Diagnosis code	Procedure code
493.02 – Extrinsic asthma, with acute exacerbation	99213 (based on appropriate E/M documentation) Higher level E/M code can be reported only if face-to-face counseling exceeds 50% of documented total visit time.
989.84 – Toxic effects of tobacco	Use when pediatrician documents that the child's asthma is directly affected (worsened or exacerbated) by exposure to tobacco smoke.

Case 4. You see an 11-year-old boy for his annual well-child visit. You have been his pediatrician for five years. After meeting with the mother and child together and then meeting with the patient alone, you continue your examination and history taking. You learn that he has been smoking an occasional cigarette (about one each week) for the last three months. He steals the cigarettes from his mother's pack. You counsel him on the harms of smoking and ways to quit. When his mother returns to the room, you ask her about her smoking (without breaching your confidence with the 11-year-old) and counsel her to quit. You provide resources to your patient and his mother.

Diagnosis code	Procedure code
V20.2 – Routine infant or child health check	99393 – Preventive medicine service, established patient (age 5-11 years)
V15.89 – Other specified personal history presenting hazards to health (exposure to tobacco smoke as a potential risk)	Time spent counseling included in preventive medicine service, not separately reported

The Academy offers a fax-back coding hotline at (800) 433-9016, ext. 4022, or e-mail aapcodinghotline@aap.org.

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