

MEAT Guidelines

The acronym MEAT is used to describe the types of documentation in the medical record that would support the assignment and reporting of ICD-10-CM diagnosis codes according to Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and ICD-10-CM Official Coding Guidelines. In addition to the diagnosis itself, the documentation must include whatever action the provider took during a face-to-face visit relative to the management of the diagnosis. **Documentation of a diagnosis without the clinical significance, current status or plan of care isn't considered sufficient documentation to submit the corresponding ICD-10-CM code on the claim for that visit.**

What does MEAT stand for?

- **M = Monitoring** by ordering or referencing labs, imaging studies or other tests
- **E = Evaluation** with a targeted part of the physical examination specific to a certain diagnosis
- **A = Assessment** of the status, progression or severity of the diagnosis
- **T = Treatment** with medication, surgical intervention or lifestyle modification. **Treatment also includes referral to a specialist for consultation or management.**

Examples of MEAT include:

Monitoring

Ordering diagnostic tests:

- "HgbA1c ordered"
- "Chest x-ray ordered"
- "Checking PT/INR"

Referencing test results

- "CT scan of abdomen shows stable AAA"
- "EKG reveals atrial fibrillation"
- "U/A negative for protein"

Evaluation

Targeted physical exam for specific diagnosis:

- PVD – "Dorsalis pedis and posterior tibial pulses are weak"
- Diabetic neuropathy – "Monofilament exam showed decreased sensation"
- COPD – "Diminished air entry with expiratory wheezing on lung exam"

MEAT

Assessment

Status:

- "Stable," "unstable"
- "Well controlled," "poorly controlled," "out of control"

Progression:

- "Worsening," "improving," "unchanged"
- "Doing better," "progressing as expected"

Severity:

- "Mild," "moderate," "severe"
- "Minimal," "significant," "extreme"

Treatment

Medication:

- "Cardizem added," "increased dose of Lasik"
- "Refilled metformin," "continue statins"

Surgical intervention:

- "Femoral artery stented"
- "Malignant melanoma excised"

Lifestyle modification:

- "Diet and exercise discussed"
- "Encouraged to attend AA meetings"

Referral to specialist:

- "Ophthalmologist managing exudative macular degeneration"
- "Follow up with nephrology for secondary hyperparathyroidism"