

Provider Documentation: Arthritis

Documentation Tips & Best Practices

Did you know that documenting the site and type of arthritis is essential to complete and accurate coding?

Key elements to document are:

- Site(s): knee, hip, shoulder, wrist, etc.
- Laterality and extremity: right, left, upper, lower
- Type: primary, secondary, post-traumatic, osteo, rheumatoid, psoriatic, gout, juvenile, etc.

Additional considerations:

- Document rheumatoid factor for rheumatoid arthritis (i.e., with or without RA antibody)
- Document the etiology of secondary or post-traumatic arthritis
- Note any underlying associated diagnoses or conditions
- Clearly state the causal relationship of secondary or post-traumatic arthritis
- Document other organ involvement

Utilize MEAT (Monitor, Evaluate, Assess, Treat) to specifically address patient conditions:

Monitor	Evaluate	Assess	Treat
Signs Symptoms Disease progression Disease regression	Test results Medication effectiveness Response to treatment Physical exam findings	Test ordered Counseling Record review Discussion	Medication Therapies Referral Other modalities
MEAT Examples: Arthritis			
Primary osteoarthritis, right hip – Pain worse at the end of the day and after periods of activity.	Rheumatoid arthritis of multiple sites without rheumatoid factor – Pain controlled with tramadol.	Post-traumatic osteoarthritis, left ankle – Follow-up AP radiograph shows severe degenerative changes 2 years post-intra-articular fracture.	Juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, bilateral knees – Referred to physical therapy.