

Depression, unspecified vs. major depressive disorder, single episode, unspecified

For a diagnosis of major depressive disorder, symptoms must cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. Although individuals with mild depression may appear to function normally, the condition can still be present. Additionally, symptoms must not be attributable to substance use or another medical condition.

ICD-10 documentation guidance for major depressive disorder

Coding major depressive disorder accurately requires the documentation to note the following:

- Symptoms present for at least 2 weeks
- Specify if it is a single episode or recurrent episode
- Indicate severity: mild, moderate, severe (with or without psychotic features)

Note if the episode is in partial or full remission. Partial remission indicates that the condition is still being managed and/or treated.

ICD-10-CM codes for depression

The code **F32.A** Depression has been created and the narrative at category **F32** has been revised to Depression. Previously, in ICD-10-CM, the narrative at category **F32** was defaulted to Depression not otherwise specified (NOS) ICD-10 code **F32.9**, major depressive disorder, single episode, unspecified. However, this code did not separately capture the actual occurrence of depression that was not further specified and statistically inflated the incidence of major depressive disorder.

F32.0	Major depressive disorder, single episode, mild	F32.5	Major depressive disorder, single episode, in full remission
F32.1	Major depressive disorder, single episode, moderate	F32.8	Other depressive episodes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• F32.81 Premenstrual dysphoric disorder• F32.89 Other specified depressive episodes
F32.2	Major depressive disorder, single episode, severe without psychotic features	F32.9	Major depressive disorder, single episode, unspecified
F32.3	Major depressive disorder, single episode, severe with psychotic features	F32.A	Depression, unspecified
F32.4	Major depressive disorder, single episode, in partial remission		

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Depression, unspecified vs. major depressive disorder, single episode, unspecified — Clinical documentation and coding tips

Documentation best practices

- If the documentation does not meet the specificity as noted in the above list, then the diagnosis can only support Depression, unspecified (F32.A).
- Always document to the highest degree of specificity: Type and episode.
- Avoid documenting in past medical history (PMH) if the individual is receiving current treatments, including prescribed medication and/or receiving counseling/therapy.
- If member has a diagnosis of depression and a diagnosis of anxiety and if there is a causal relationship between the two conditions, then documentation must establish the relationship by stating depression “with,” “due to,” or “related to” anxiety to capture the code that encompasses both diagnoses (F34.1 or F41.8).

References

- Contract-Level Risk Adjustment Data Validation Medical Record Reviewer Guidance In effect as of 03/20/2019. Yew, K.S. & Cheng, E.M. (2015).
- Optum (2025). ICD-10-CM Expert for Physicians: The Complete Official Code Set (2025)
- ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting FY 2025; Section I.A.15