CODING BURNS
UNDERSTANDING BURN CODES
941-946

- ICD-9 lists two distinct sets of diagnosis codes for burns, and in most cases you will have to select a code from each set to describe the patient's condition properly.

- Before you assign a diagnosis code, you will need to know the burn location, the burn degree and the percentage of body surface burned.
1. **Location** - First, you should use codes **941-946** "to code the burn by body location"

**For example:** if a patient has a burn on her hand, you know to begin your coding with the **944** series.
CODING BURNS
BURN DEGREE
941-946

2. **Degree** - When reporting a diagnosis from the **941-946 series**, you must select a **fourth digit**.

- **Codes 941-946** each list **six fourth-digit options** to indicate the degree of the patient's burn:
  - 0 (*unspecified*)
  - 1-3 (first, second or third degree)
  - 4 (*deep necrosis of underlying tissues without mention of loss of a body part*) and
  - 5 (*with loss of a body part*).
3. **Precise Location** - Codes 941-945, you must also assign a **fifth digit** to indicate the **precise location of the patient's burn**.

**Example:** The patient has a second-degree burn on his ankle. You would report **945.23** *(Burn of lower limb(s); blisters, epidermal loss (second degree); ankle)*.

**Important:** You should code for only the **highest-level burn** when you report multiple burns of differing degrees (severity) in the same area.
CODING BURNS
CATEGORY 948

- Code 948 - is used to classify burns according to the extent of the body surface area involved. This code can be used by itself when the site of the burn is unspecified, or it can be used in conjunction with a code from 940 to 947 to further describe the patient's condition.

- Code 948 requires both a fourth digit and a fifth digit.
  - The fourth digit specifies the total percent of the body surface burned (at any degree),
  - The fifth digit specifies the percent of the body surface with third degree burns.

For example: if 30 percent of the patient's body surface has second degree burns, but the site of the burns is unspecified, use code 948.30.

The fourth digit of 3 indicates that 30 percent of the body is burned, and the fifth digit of 0 indicates that no part of the body received third degree burns.
**CODING BURNS**
**CATEGORY 948**

- **Code 948** - could also be used for a patient who suffered **first degree burns to the chest wall** and **second degree burns to the abdominal wall**, with **11 percent** of the total body surface area burned.

**EXAMPLE:** Along with codes **942.23** and **942.12** showing the site and degree, you may use **948.10** to show that **11 percent** of the total surface area was burned, but none of the burns were third degree burns.
CODING BURNS

DETERMINING BURN SEVERITY

- Burn Size
  - Calculated by the "rule of nines"

- Burn Depth
  - Burns Depth are classified in three degrees: first, second & third

- First Degree
  - Superficial burns involving only the top layer of the skin (epidermal layer).
  - They are inflamed and painful, but they do not blister
CODING BURNS
DETERMINING BURN SEVERITY

First Degree

- **First-degree burns** are red, moist, swollen, and painful.
- The burned area whitens (blanches) when lightly touched, but does not develop blisters.
CODING BURNS

DETERMINING BURN SEVERITY

- **Second Degree Burns**
  - Involve the middle layer of the skin (dermal layer)
  - These burns do include blisters
  - They are painful because the nerve endings are still intact
CODING BURNS
DETERMINING BURN SEVERITY

- **Second Degree Burns**
  - **Second-degree burns** are red, swollen, and painful,
  - They develop blisters that may ooze a clear fluid
  - The burned area may blanch when touched.

*Second Degree Burn*
CODING BURNS
DETERMINING BURN SEVERITY

**Third Degree**

- **Third degree Burns** involve **all three layers** of skin (*epidermis, dermis, and fat layer*), usually destroying the sweat glands, hair follicles, and nerve endings.

- **Third degree Burns** can cause severe pain.

- If the nerve endings have been severely damaged or destroyed, the burn area may not hurt right away.

- They evolve into a granulating surface when the burned skin sloughs off, and they usually heal as the edges of the wound pull closer together.
CODING BURNS
DETERMINING BURN SEVERITY

- **Third Degree Burns** – *Continue*
  - They also may be closed with a **skin graft**.

- **Third-degree** burns, also called **full-thickness burns**, injure all the layers of the skin including the fatty tissue beneath them.

- These are serious burns that can affect the skin's ability to grow back
Third Degree Burns - Continue

Third-degree burns may look white, cherry red, or black.

- They do not change color when you press on them (they do not blanch).
- Although blisters may develop, the burn is mostly dry, hard, and leathery-looking.

Third Degree Burn
CODING BURNS

DETERMINING BURN SEVERITY

- When Wound Depth is not Apparent
  - Correlate the mechanism of the injury with its appearance.
    - **For example**, an immersion scald produces larger and deeper injuries than a spill scald.

  - **Burns from explosives** without continued combustions (flash burns) produce superficial injuries.

  - **Hot contact burns** are usually small but deep,

  - And burns that result from **burning clothing** are usually full thickness.
CODING BURNS
DETERMINING BURN SEVERITY

- **Age**

  - Burns in *infants* and in *older patients* may be more serious than the same burns in an adolescent.
  
  - The *strength* and *health* of the patient play a large factor in the severity of the injury.
CODING BURNS
DETERMINING BURN SEVERITY

Pre-Existing Injuries

- A patient's *pre-existing condition* can sometimes make the burn injury even more dangerous and serious.

  - **For example**, burns in patients with *heart conditions, or angina* could prove life-threatening.

  - **Infected burns** for patients who are *diabetic* could also prove dangerous, as well as *chemical ingestion* for patients with *gastric ulcers*
CODING BURNS
DETERMINING BURN SEVERITY

Associated Injuries

- Injuries a patient receives in addition to the burn may complicate the situation further

- Injuries such as *fractures, and smoke inhalation*, cause additional stress and add to the severity of the burn.
CODING BURNS
DETERMINING BURN SEVERITY

Critical Body Parts

- A burn may be considered more severe when it occurs on a critical body part.

- A burn to the mouth, nose, or perineum, is likely to become infected or cause other medical problems (co-morbidities).

- Similarly, burns to the remainder of the eyes, ears, hands and feet increase the potential for mortality.
CODING BURNS
DETERMINING BURN SEVERITY

Classification of Burns

- Burns are classified as minor, moderate, or severe.

- All first and second-degree burns that involve less than about 15% of the body surface usually are classified as minor.

- A third-degree burn may be classified as minor if it involves less than 5% of the body surface, unless it involves the face, hands, feet, or genitals.

  - Burns involving these areas or involving deeper layers of skin over larger areas of the body are classified as moderate or severe.
CODING BURNS
DETERMINING BURN SEVERITY

Prognosis

- First and second-degree burns heal in days to weeks without scarring.
- Deep second-degree and small third-degree burns take weeks to heal and usually cause scarring.
- Larger third-degree burns require skin grafting.
- Burns that involve more than 90% of the body surface, or more than 60% in an older person, usually are fatal.
CODING GUIDELINES FOR BURNS

HOW TO CODE BURNS

Code 940-949

- Used for burns from *electrical appliances, electricity, flames, hot objects, lightning, radiation, internal and external burns and scalds.*

- The criteria used to code burns are:
  - Site
  - Percentage of body surface involved (area),
  - And degree of burn
CODING GUIDELINES FOR BURNS
HOW TO CODE BURNS

Code 940-945 (site, external)

- Used in coding burns by site.

- The first three digits for each code indicate the general section of the body.

- Example: Code 944 covers the wrists, hands, fingers and thumbs.
Code 940

- Covers burns confined to the **eye** and **adnexa**, the **fourth digit** specifies both:
  - The **type** of burn
  - And the exact **location** of the burn within the eye or adnexa.

- **Example:** A **chemical burn** (acid) to the cornea, would be coded **940.3**.
CODING GUIDELINES FOR BURNS

HOW TO CODE BURNS

Code 941-945

- The **Fourth digit** specifies the **depth** of the burn

- The **Fifth digit** specifies the exact **location**

**EXAMPLE:** A second degree burn to the chest wall, would be coded **942.22**.

- The First **three** digits, **942**, indicate the general trunk, chest and abdominal walls, back, and genitalia area.

- The **Fourth digit** of two indicates that the burn was a **second degree burn**,

- The **Fifth digit** of two indicates that the burn was **specifically to the chest wall**
Let’s Try an Example

**Diagnosis:** Burn to the Elbow

**Diagnosis:** Burn to the forehead and cheek

**Diagnosis:** Second-degree Burn to the Wrist
Let’s Try an Example

**Diagnosis:** First and second degree burn to the back

942.24
CODING GUIDELINES FOR BURNS

HOW TO CODE BURNS

- **Code 946** *(multiple sites, external)*
  - When coding burns, assign **separate codes** for each burn site.
  - **Category 946** used for burns that are classifiable to more than one **three digit** code from **940 to 945**.
  - **Example:** 946 is used when there are multiple specified sites.
    - The **Fourth digit** for this code specifies the **degree** of burn
Let’s Try an Example

**Diagnosis:** Deep Necrosis of underlying tissues [deep third degree] with loss of a body part

946.5
CODING GUIDELINES FOR BURNS

HOW TO CODE BURNS

- **Code 947** *(site, internal organs)*
  - Used for burns to the internal organs due to ingestion of a chemical agent.
  - The **fourth digit** specifies the exact **site** of the burn.

**EXAMPLE:** Code **947.2**, indicates a burn to the esophagus.
Let’s Try an Example

**Diagnosis:** Burn to the Tongue

947.0

**Diagnosis:** Burn to the Small Intestine

947.3
CODING BURNS
DETERMINING BURN SEVERITY

- **Burn Severity**
  - The *severity* determines how burns are *predicted to heal* and *whether complications are likely*
  - Doctors determine the severity of the burn by estimating the *percentage of the body surface that has been burned*.

- **Calculated by using “rule of nines”**
  - The *rule* is based on the *body surface area burned*
  - It bases the *percentage assigned on the number nine*
WHAT IS THE RULE OF NINES?

Estimates extent of burns

- Head and neck - 9%
- Each arm - 9%
- Each leg - 18%
- Anterior trunk - 18%
- Posterior trunk - 18%
- Genitalia - 1%

May estimate small children or overweight adults differently
Wallace rule of nines—is a good, quick way of estimating medium to large burns in adults. The body is divided into areas of 9%, and the total burn area can be calculated. It is not accurate in children.
Lund and Browder chart— if used correctly, is the most accurate method. It compensates for the variation in body shape with age and can give an accurate assessment of burn area in children.
CODING GUIDELINES FOR BURNS
HOW TO CODE BURNS

**Code 948** *(area/extend of the body surface)*

- Used to classify burns *according to the extent of the body surface area involved.*

- This code can be used by itself when the *site of the burn is unspecified*.

- Can be used in conjunction with a code from 940 to 947 *to further describe the patient's condition*.

- Requires both a **Fourth** and a **Fifth Digit**.
CODING GUIDELINES FOR BURNS
HOW TO CODE BURNS

- **Code 948** *(area/extend of the body surface)* – Continue
  - The **Fourth Digit** specifies the *total percent of the body surface burned* (at any degree)

  - The **Fifth Digit** specifies the percent of the body surface with *third degree* burns.

- **EXAMPLE:** If *30 percent* of the patient's body surface has *second degree* burns, but the *site of the burns* is unspecified, use code 948.30.
  - The **Fourth Digit** of *3* indicates that *30* percent of the body is burned

  - The **Fifth Digit** of *0* indicates that *no part of the body received Third Degree* burns.
**CODING GUIDELINES FOR BURNS**

**HOW TO CODE BURNS**

- **Code 948** (area) *(area/extend of the body surface)* Continue

  - **Code 948** could also be used for a patient who suffered *first degree* burns to the chest wall, and *second degree* burns to the abdominal wall, with **11 percent of the total body surface area burned.** Along with codes **942.23** and **942.12** showing the *site* and *degree*

  - Use **948.10** to show that **11 percent** of the *total surface area was burned*, but none of the burns were *third degree* burns.
Let’s Try an Example

Physician estimates burns as:

- 1st degree - 9%
- 2nd degree - 18%
- 3rd degree - 36%

How would you code this example?

- Total body surface burned (4th digit)
- Total 3rd degree burns (5th digit)

**Percentage of Body surface (any degree)** - 948.6

**Percentage of Body surface (3rd Degree)** - 948.63
Let’s Try an Example

**Diagnosis:** Second-degree burn 1% Chin, and Third-degree burn 3% to scapular region, for a total of 4% of the body.

- **Chin:** 941.24
- **Scapular region:** 943.36
- **Burn, extent, less than 10%:** 948.00
CODING GUIDELINES FOR BURNS
HOW TO CODE BURNS

- **Code 949 (Unspecified site)**
  - Used for burns for which the **degree of burn is known** but the **site is not**.
  
  - The **fourth digit** indicates the degree and **specifies whether or not a body part was lost**.

- Use a **948** code if the **percent of surface area is known**.
Let’s Try an Example

**Diagnosis:** Full-thickness skin loss due to burn (third degree NOS), unspecified site

949.3
CODING GUIDELINES FOR BURNS
HOW TO CODE BURNS

- **Code 958.3 (Infected wound)**

  - Assign **Code 958.3, “Posttraumatic wound infection, not elsewhere classified”,** as an additional code for any documented infected burn site.
Let’s Try an Example

**Diagnosis:** Infected third-degree burn to the right hand, 11%, subsequent treatment.

- **Burn, right hand, third degree:** 944.30
- **Burn, infected:** 958.3
- **Burn, area 11% & 11% Third-degree:** 948.11
How do I Code for External Causes of Burns?

- **E Codes** can document how burns occurred
  - Category **E849**: Documents **place of occurrence**

Accidental

- If the burn is accidental, report an **E Code**.
- ICD-9-CM classifies **accidents caused by fire and flames** to **E890-E899**.
- Look in **E924.x** 
  
  "(accident caused by hot substance or object, caustic or corrosive material, and steam)"

  for codes describing accidental burns from hot objects.

- **EXAMPLE**: If a patient accidentally burns herself with boiling water, use **E924.0**
  
  (. . . hot liquids and vapors, including steam).
CASE STUDY

**Diagnosis:** Third-degree burn of abdomen 10%, and second-degree burn of thigh (5%); burned by hot tap water in garage at work.

- **Burn, abdomen, third degree:** 942.33
- **Burn, thigh, second degree:** 945.26
- **Burn, area 15% (Any degree):** 948.1
- **Burn, area 10% Third Degree:** 948.11
- **Burn by hot (boiling) tap water:** E924.2
- **Industrial place and premises:** E849.3
**CASE STUDY**

**Diagnosis:** Third degree burn to thigh and second degree burn to foot. Patient was burned by hot steam pipe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Third degree thigh:</strong></th>
<th>945.36</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second degree foot:</strong></td>
<td>945.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent TBSA:</strong></td>
<td>948.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent TBSA 3rd degree</strong></td>
<td>948.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hot liquid &amp; Vapors, including steam (Other):</strong></td>
<td>E924.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unspecified Place</strong></td>
<td>E849.9</td>
</tr>
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