



ICD-10-CA Classification of Multiple Hernias

Classification of cases in which a patient presents with more than one hernia can be challenging, as evidenced by a number of coding questions. Hernias are classified using 3 axes: type (e.g., femoral, inguinal), laterality (if applicable) and level of severity (e.g., with obstruction and/or gangrene). But how are hernias classified when the patient has more than one hernia of the same type but of mixed levels of severity? This Tip for Coders provides some guidance on the correct ICD-10-CA classification of multiple hernias where different axes of classification are involved.

Classification of hernias of the same type

When a patient has either a bilateral hernia of the same type (e.g., left and right inguinal) or more than one unilateral hernia of the same type (e.g., 2 inguinal hernias on left side), assign a code for the correct type and laterality and select the highest level of severity for the third axis. This can be seen in the alphabetical lookup below. The severity (e.g., obstruction) does not have to be present in both hernias.

Hernia, hernial (acquired) (recurrent) K46.9

– inguinal (direct) (external) (funicular) (indirect) (internal) (oblique) (scrotal) (sliding) K40.9

– – bilateral K40.2

– – – with

– – – – gangrene (and obstruction) K40.1

– – – – obstruction K40.0

– – unilateral K40.9

– – – with

– – – – gangrene (and obstruction) K40.4

– – – – obstruction K40.3

Whether both sides or both hernias have obstruction and/or gangrene is *less* important than knowing that there is *some* obstruction/gangrene present.





Applying classification of multiple hernias

Case 1 A patient with bilateral inguinal hernias presents for hernia repair. Documentation states that the left-sided hernia is incarcerated.

Diagnosis	Diagnosis type	Rationale
K40.0 Bilateral inguinal hernia, with obstruction, without gangrene	M	K40.0 is assigned as this denotes the hernia with the highest level of severity (i.e., incarcerated). Knowing that there is obstruction present is more important than knowing that the hernias are of different levels of severity.

Case 2 A patient with 2 left-sided inguinal hernias presents for hernia repair. Documentation states that 1 of these hernias was found to be incarcerated with fat.

Diagnosis	Diagnosis type	Rationale
K40.3 Unilateral or unspecified inguinal hernia, with obstruction, without gangrene	M	K40.3 is assigned as this denotes the hernia with the highest level of severity (i.e., incarcerated). Knowing that there is obstruction present is more important than knowing that the hernias are of different levels of severity.

Case 3 A patient with a right-sided incarcerated femoral hernia and a right-sided inguinal hernia presents for repair of these hernias.

Diagnosis	Diagnosis type	Rationale
K41.3 Unilateral or unspecified femoral hernia, with obstruction, without gangrene	M	Both K41.3 and K40.9 are assigned, as these 2 hernias are different types (1 is femoral, 1 is inguinal). Since they are different types of hernia, the appropriate level of severity is identified separately.
K40.9 Unilateral or unspecified inguinal hernia, without obstruction or gangrene	1	