

Documentation & Coding Reference Guide: **Epilepsy & Seizures**

A quick reference guide to assist with accurate, complete documentation and coding that reflects the true nature of a patient's current health status at the highest level of specificity. Per the *ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting*, "The importance of consistent, complete documentation in the medical record cannot be overemphasized. Without such documentation, accurate coding cannot be achieved."

Document for Every Visit:

- Diagnosis: **Epilepsy vs. Seizure vs. Convulsion**
- **Type** of seizure/epilepsy
- **Frequency** (single vs. recurrent)
- **Intractability status** (if applicable)
- **Status epilepticus** (with or without)
- **Underlying cause or trigger**
- **Treatment and response**
- **Medications linked to condition**
- **Current vs. historical status**

Documentation determines whether **G40 (epilepsy)** or **R56 (seizure/convulsion)** codes are used.

Seizure Classification
• Focal (Partial) Seizures ○ Begin in one area of the brain ○ May spread to other areas ○ Symptoms often start mild and progress • Generalized Seizures ○ Affect both sides of the brain simultaneously ○ Includes: ▪ Absence (Petit mal) ▪ Myoclonic ▪ Tonic / Atonic ▪ Clonic ▪ Tonic-clonic (Grand mal)
Intractability
Specify clearly: • Not intractable • Intractable, including: ○ Treatment resistant ○ Pharmacologically resistant ○ Refractory

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○ Poorly controlled Note: Recurrent seizures alone do not indicate intractable epilepsy.
Status Epilepticus
Document: • With or without status epilepticus Definition: • Status epilepticus is a prolonged seizure or series of seizures without full recovery in between, typically lasting more than five minutes. • Repeated or prolonged seizures without recovery between episodes • Requires urgent medical intervention
Underlying Cause or Triggers
Examples include: • Alcohol or drug use • Sleep deprivation • Hormonal changes • Stress • Trauma, stroke, infection • Idiopathic (unknown cause)

Treatment and Response

Document:

- Medications (e.g., Keppra, Lamictal)
- Diet therapy (e.g., ketogenic diet)
- Devices or surgical interventions
- Patient response:
 - Controlled
 - Partial response
 - No improvement

Link all treatments **directly to the condition** within the EMR.

ICD-10-CM Coding Overview

Code	Description	Use When Documented
G40.0--	Focal idiopathic epilepsy (localized onset partial)	Benign childhood epilepsy w/ centrotemporal EEG or childhood epilepsy w/ occipital EEG paroxysms
G40.1--	Focal epilepsy (simple partial)	Focal seizures without impaired awareness
G40.2--	Focal epilepsy (complex partial)	Altered awareness present
G40.3--	Generalized epilepsy	Non-intractable generalized epilepsy
G40.A--	Absence epileptic syndrome	Childhood absence epilepsy
G40.B--	Juvenile myoclonic epilepsy	Impulsive Petit mal seizures

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Code	Description	Use When Documented
G40.C--	Lafora progressive myoclonus epilepsy	Lafora body disease
G40.4--	Other generalized epilepsy	Grand mal seizures
G40.5--	External cause seizures	Trigger identified
G40.8--	Other epilepsy	Specific syndromes
G40.9--	Unspecified epilepsy	Use only if necessary
R56.0-	Febrile convulsions	Febrile seizure NOS
R56.1	Post-traumatic seizures	No epilepsy diagnosis
R56.9	Unspecified convulsions	Seizure(s) (convulsive) NOS

Use **G40** codes only when epilepsy or seizure disorder is documented; otherwise use **R56** codes.

Key Takeaways

- Use **specific terminology** to support accurate coding
- Clarify **epilepsy vs. isolated seizure**
- Document **control status and treatment response**
- Do not assume **intractability**—must be stated
- Ensure documentation reflects **current condition and care plan**

Resources

- ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting, FY 2026, Section I.A.13 (Etiology/Manifestation Convention)
- ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting, FY 2026, Section I.B.18 (Use of Signs/Symptom/Unspecified Codes)
- [ICD-10-CM Official Guidelines for Coding and Reporting \(FY 2026\)](#)
- Optum 360 Encoder Pro
- [Johns Hopkins Medicine](#)
- Internal Coding Education Materials

For questions, please contact the Blue Cross NC Provider Engagement Risk Team via email at BCBSNCRiskAdj@bcbsnc.com.