

Risk Coding Tips and Tools

Major Depressive Disorder

To ensure compliance and accurate coding, providers must include the diagnosis, status, and plan (DSP) when documenting for major depressive disorder (MDD). Without it, the diagnosis may not be accepted.

Key Details to Include:

- **Episode Type:** First time (single) or happened before (recurrent)?
- **Severity:** Mild, moderate, or severe? Any psychotic symptoms?
- **Remission Status:** Is the patient getting better? Partial or full remission?

Treatment Plan:

- List the treatment being used, including medication name and dosage

Coding Tips:

- Use the correct ICD-10-CM code. Writing “depression” is not enough for an MDD diagnosis code
- If MDD is confirmed, avoid using terms like “suspected” or “probable”

Physician Documentation Examples

Example 1:

Patient presents for two weeks follow up of recurrent MDD, moderate. Symptoms included persistent low mood, loss of interest, and fatigue; after starting treatment of Zoloft 150mg daily, patient refers improvement of symptoms. Continue Zoloft, follow up next month.

Provider coded: F33.1 – Major depressive disorder, recurrent, moderate 

Example 2:

Patient with depression being managed by psychologist, asking refill for quetiapine.

Provider coded: F33.3 – Major depressive disorder, recurrent, severe with psychotic features 

Corrected code: F32.A – Depression, unspecified 

Example 3:

Patient with a ten-year history of recurrent MDD, most recently experienced a severe episode with psychotic features eight months ago, including auditory hallucinations. She was treated with sertraline 100mg daily, olanzapine 5mg nightly. She has remained symptom-free for over three months, with no signs of depression or psychosis.

Provider coded: F33.42 – Major Depressive Disorder, recurrent, severe with psychotic features, in full remission 

Health Alliance. (2025). Documenting and coding major depressive disorders. <https://www.healthalliance.org/documents/24810>

You can find this resource and others like it in the OHN Risk Coding Corner at
www.OrlandoHealth.com/Network/Resources.

You can also contact us at RiskCoding@OrlandoHealth.com for additional questions or support needs.