



Chapter 7: Diseases of the Eye and Adnexa (H00–H59)

ICD-10-CM General Guidelines — Quick Reference for Students

CODING DECODED

1. Assigning Glaucoma Codes (H40)

Assign as many H40 codes as needed to fully describe: the type of glaucoma, the affected eye, and the glaucoma stage.

Golden Rule: One glaucoma code rarely tells the whole story — type + eye + stage usually means multiple codes.

2. Bilateral Glaucoma — Same Type & Stage

Situation	What To Code
Both eyes same type/stage, AND a bilateral code exists	One bilateral code + 7th character for stage
Both eyes same type/stage, but NO bilateral code exists (e.g., H40.10, H40.20)	One code for the type, with the 7th character for stage (still just one code)

3. Bilateral Glaucoma — Different Type or Stage

- If each eye has a different type or stage, and the classification distinguishes laterality → assign a separate code for EACH eye instead of a bilateral code.

4. Stage Progresses During the Admission

- If glaucoma stage advances during a single admission, code only the HIGHEST stage documented during that stay.

5. Indeterminate vs. Unspecified Stage

7th Character	When to Use
“4” — Indeterminate stage	Stage clinically CANNOT be determined — must be based on documentation
“0” — Unspecified	No documentation at all about the stage — do not confuse with “indeterminate”

6. Blindness / Visual Loss (H54)

What's Documented	Eyes Affected	Code
“Blindness” or “low vision”, visual impairment category NOT specified	Both eyes	H54.3 Unqualified visual loss, both eyes
“Blindness” or “low vision”, visual impairment category NOT specified	One eye	H54.6– Unqualified visual loss, one eye
“Blindness” or “visual loss”, no info on one vs. both eyes	Not specified	H54.7 Unspecified visual loss

7. Key Codes at a Glance

Code	Meaning	Watch-out
H40.—	Glaucoma (type/eye/stage)	May need multiple codes for one patient
H40.10 / H40.20	Certain glaucoma types with no bilateral code	One code covers both eyes when type/stage match
7th char “4”	Indeterminate stage	Stage genuinely cannot be determined clinically
7th char “0”	Unspecified stage	No documentation on stage at all
H54.3	Unqualified visual loss, both eyes	Impairment category not documented
H54.6–	Unqualified visual loss, one eye	Impairment category not

Code	Meaning	Watch-out
		documented
H54.7	Unspecified visual loss	Neither laterality nor category documented

Study tip: for glaucoma, always check three things before coding: type, eye(s) affected, and stage — missing any one usually means the wrong code.