



Chapter 13: Diseases of the Musculoskeletal System and Connective Tissue (M00–M99)

Quick-Reference Student Guide

CODING DECODED

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a. Site and Laterality

Bone vs. Joint

- Most Chapter 13 codes carry a site and laterality designation — the bone, joint, or muscle involved.
- Rule:** even when the affected portion sits at a joint end of the bone (e.g., avascular necrosis M87, osteoporosis M80/M81), the site designation is the BONE, not the joint.

Multiple Sites

- Code each documented site individually.
- Use the "multiple sites" code only when specific site(s) are not documented.

b. Acute Traumatic vs. Chronic or Recurrent Conditions

- Chapter 13:** healed/old injuries, and recurrent bone, joint, or muscle conditions.
- Chapter 19:** any current, acute injury.

Query trigger: Documentation doesn't make clear whether a condition is a current acute injury or a chronic/recurrent one.

c. Coding of Pathologic Fractures

- 7th character A:** used throughout active treatment — based on whether treatment is active, NOT on whether it's a new provider or first encounter.
- 7th character D:** subsequent encounters during the healing/recovery phase, after active treatment ends.
- Other 7th characters:** subsequent encounters for healing problems — malunion, nonunion, sequelae.
- Complications of surgical fracture repair during healing → use the appropriate complication code, not a fracture code.

d. Osteoporosis

M81 — Without Current Pathological Fracture

- Osteoporosis is systemic — M81 has NO site component.
- Use M81 even if the patient has a history of an osteoporosis fracture.
- Add:** Z87.310 (personal history of healed osteoporosis fracture) after the M81 code, when applicable.

M80 — With Current Pathological Fracture

- M80 codes identify the site of the CURRENT fracture (not the osteoporosis itself).
- Use M80 — never a traumatic fracture code — for any fracture in a known osteoporosis patient, even from a minor fall/trauma that wouldn't break a normal healthy bone.

Scenario	Category	What the Site Code Reflects
No current fracture	M81	No site component (systemic condition)
Current pathologic fracture	M80	Site of the fracture
History of healed osteoporosis fracture	M81 + Z87.310	Add-on status code

e. Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome

- See Section I.C.1.g.1.1 for Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome guidance.

