

URMC Compliance Office
Guidance for use of Modifier 79

Unrelated procedure/service by the same physician during the post-operative period

Modifier 79 Unrelated procedure/service by the same physician during the post-operative period: use modifier 79 to report an unrelated procedure or service performed during a post-operative period that is unrelated and not a result of the first surgery. NOTE: This modifier should not be appended to an E&M service. (See modifier 24) (CPT, 2011)

Appropriate Usage

- To describe an unrelated procedure performed during the post-operative period of the original procedure.
- The two procedures are performed by the same physician or physician billing group.
- Pertains to all procedures codes with a 10-90 day global period.
- Modifier 79 should be appended to the second procedure.

Inappropriate Usage

- The procedure performed is related to the original procedure or a staged procedure.
- If the services performed are related to the original procedure, it is part of the global period.

Examples:

- The patient had a Diskectomy with fusion of the L4-L5 vertebrae 70-days ago. The patient tripped at home and fractured the right radial shaft. The surgeon who performed the Diskectomy is contacted and performs a closed manipulation of the radial shaft and applies a cast. The second procedure is unrelated to the first procedure. (CPT code 25505-79)
- Cataract surgery is performed on the left eye. During the global period, cataract surgery is performed on the right eye by the same physician. (CPT code 66984-79-LT).
- Patient has a repeat FEM-POP done on June 1st and is released from the hospital. A week after being home, patient is re-hospitalized on June 9th with renal failure. Hemodialysis is indicated and the same physician inserts a cannula for hemodialysis on June 10th the physician's services for the insertion of the cannula for hemodialysis is unrelated to the FEM-POP performed during the previous hospitalization. (CPT code 36810-79).