

**TITLE:** Use of Modifier 79

**POLICY/PURPOSE:** To establish a procedure under which the Modifier 79 may be appended to a procedure code.

**DEFINITIONS:**

Modifier 79 Definition: Unrelated Procedure or Service by the Same Physician or Other Qualified Health Care Professional During the Postoperative Period

When the Modifier 79 is used appropriately, the postoperative period of the subsequent procedure starts anew. All three (pre-, intra-, and post-operative) pieces of the subsequent procedure are reimbursed. Inappropriate application of Modifier 79 may lead to the subsequent procedure being underpaid or overpaid (depending on the actual modifier supported) and may have a negative impact on related postoperative visits billed.

**PROCEDURE:**

It may be necessary to indicate that a subsequent procedure was performed during the postoperative period of the initial procedure but was unrelated to the initial procedure. When this subsequent procedure is unrelated to the initial procedure, the subsequent procedure may be reported by adding Modifier 79 to the subsequent procedure code.

Modifier 79 is applicable on the subsequent procedure when all of the following have been met:

1. initial procedure has either a 10-day or a 90-day postoperative period;
2. subsequent procedure is performed within the postoperative period of the initial procedure;
3. initial procedure and subsequent procedure were performed by same specialty provider within same group;
4. subsequent procedure was unrelated to the initial surgery (i.e., subsequent procedure was not planned or anticipated [staged] at the time of the initial procedure, more extensive than the original procedure, did not represent a therapeutic surgical procedure following a diagnostic surgical procedure, or was not an issue/complication arising from the initial procedure).

Add-on procedure codes take on the postoperative period of their parent code.

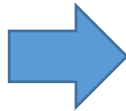
***The effective date of this Policy is not intended to provide a period in time when this procedure was not applicable. The effective date only represents the date the Policy and Procedure form was completed.***

**Modifier 79 Decision Chart**

Subsequent procedure performed during the postoperative period of the initial procedure?

No      Modifier 79 does not apply.

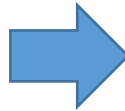
Yes



Subsequent procedure performed by a provider with same specialty and in same group as provider of initial surgery?

No      Modifier 79 does not apply.

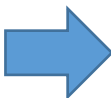
Yes



Subsequent procedure unrelated to the initial procedure (i.e., subsequent procedure was not planned or anticipated [staged] at the time of the initial procedure, more extensive than the initial procedure, did not represent a therapeutic surgical procedure following a diagnostic surgical procedure, or was not an issue/complication arising from the initial surgery)?

No      Do not append Modifier 79.

Yes



Append Modifier 79.

**REFERENCES:**

**APPROVED BY:**  
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