

Anatomy Tip

Anatomical Body Positions

In an effort to aid Health Information Management Coding Professionals with ICD-10 readiness, the following anatomy tip is provided with an educational intent.

Terms that describe the body in different positions and references that describe imaginary planes that transect the body are crucial to coders.

Anatomical position: The patient is in the forward-facing position with head level, eyes facing forward, feet flat on floor and palms turned forward.

Prone position: the person is face down in a reclining position.

Supine Position: the person is face up in a reclining position.

Directional Terms: Some describe a body part relative to the anatomical position, some compare position of various anatomical structures. Accuracy in description is important regardless of the type of use.

- **Superior:** Toward the top of the body or body structure
- **Inferior:** Toward the lower part of the body/structure
- **Anterior:** To or near the front of the body /structure
- **Posterior:** To the back or nearer to the back of body or structure
- **Medial:** Toward the middle or toward the medial plane
- **Lateral:** Farther away from the middle or away from the medial plane
- **Intermediate:** Between two structures
- **Ipsilateral:** On the same side of the body as another structure
- **Contralateral:** On the opposite side of the body from another structure
- **Proximal:** Nearest to the point of origin, or nearest to the trunk
- **Distal:** Farthest from the point of origin, or farthest from the trunk
- **Superficial:** Closest to the surface
- **Interior:** Nearer the center
- **Exterior:** Farther from the center