

Bladder Cancer & Coding Surgery

Guidelines for coding surgical procedures that remove/destroy tumor tissue *Only*

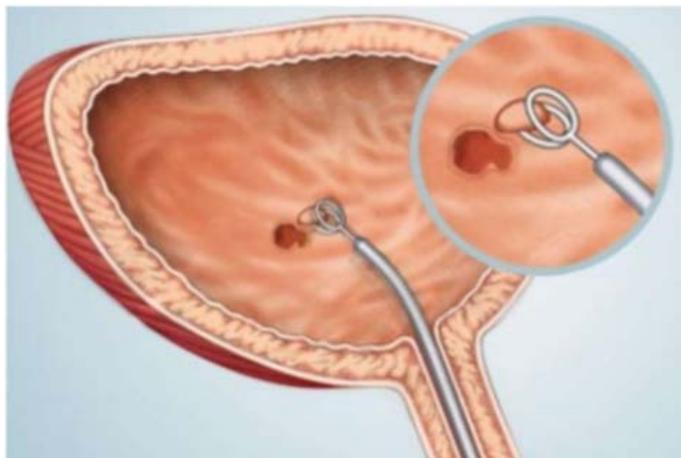
1 Site-Specific surgery codes in the 20-29 range represent some form of tumor removal without resection of the primary site.

- ◆ After removing a primary tumor, clinicians frequently employ ablative techniques to destroy any remaining tumor tissue and/or to seal off blood vessels.

2 Bladder Surgery codes include combination codes that incorporate both the tumor excision and the accompanying ablative technique used to complete the procedure.

- ◆ Combination codes for local tumor excisions performed in combination with an ablative procedure are outlined in the table below.

Surgery Codes – Bladder (C670-C679)	
Specimen sent to pathology from surgical event	
Code	Description
20	Local tumor excision, NOS
26	Polypectomy
27	Excisional biopsy; TURB / TURBT
Combination of 20 or 26-27 WITH	
21*	Photodynamic therapy (PDT)
22*	Electrocautery or Fulguration <i>Example: TURB with electrocautery</i>
23*	Cryosurgery
24*	Laser ablation
* Codes 21-24 INCLUDE local tumor excision, polypectomy or excisional biopsy.	



Miniaturized instruments allows for biopsy, fulguration and other procedures through the flexible cystoscope.

3 Coding hierarchy for Surgery of Primary Site: The coding schemas for Surgery of Primary Site list the codes in hierarchical order starting with *lower priority* codes. Generally, the higher the numerical value of the code, the higher the priority.

- ◆ However, in the 20-29 range, the code with the higher number does not necessarily represent a higher priority.
- ◆ Codes 21-24 represent more complex procedures and have priority over codes 20, 26-27.

Example: Patient with bladder cancer. Surgical procedure is described as a TURB with biopsy and fulguration of tumor base. The correct bladder surgery code is 22.

- While surgery code 27 is a higher number, record **code 22** which represents the more complex procedure.

When bladder surgery removes/destroys tumor tissue only - *continued*:

4 The full description of a surgical procedure performed for tumor removal, particularly the ablative component of the procedure, is not always stated in the title of the operative report.

- ◆ In order to select the specific combination surgery code that includes both the excisional and the ablative components of the surgical procedure, review the descriptions in the operative report and/or the pathology description of the specimen to determine the type of ablative procedure performed.

Example 1: 2/3/16 Operative Report: Transurethral Resection of Bladder Tumor. **Findings:** Large papillary tumor about 2 cm covering the right ureteral orifice; left side normal. **Procedure:** Tumor resected down to muscle with laser ablation. **Surgery is coded 24.**

Example 2: SINQ 20140078 - Often, pathology for TURBT with non-invasive papillary TCC includes a gross description with a variety of cautery descriptions. For example, "received are three cautery roughened gray-pale pink tissue fragments." However, the operative report is documented as a "TURBT" with no further description of the procedure.

SINQ Answer: Assign code 22 when cautery is mentioned in the gross description of pathology for a TURBT specimen.

The following ablative techniques are described in codes 21-24

Cryosurgery: A procedure in which an extremely cold liquid or an instrument called a cryoprobe is used to freeze and destroy abnormal tissue. A cryoprobe is cooled with substances such as liquid nitrogen, liquid nitrous oxide, or compressed argon gas. (Code 23)

Electrocautery; Fulguration: A procedure that uses heat from an electric current to destroy abnormal tissue such as a tumor. It may also be used to control bleeding during surgery. The electric current passes through an electrode that is placed on or near the tissue. The tip of the electrode is heated by the electric current to burn or destroy tissue. (Code 22)

Laser Ablation: Tissue destruction, induced by a local increase of temperature by means of laser light energy transmission. (Code 24)

Photodynamic therapy (PDT): Uses a photosensitizing agent which concentrates selectively in certain cells, followed by exposure of the involved tissue to a special light (such as laser) in order to destroy abnormal tissue. (Code 21)

