



Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield (Highmark BCBS) partners with Wellpoint companies to administer certain services to Medicaid Managed Care (MMC), Health and Recovery Plan (HARP), Child Health Plus (CHPlus), and Essential Plan members. Please note, this information is specific to the MMC, HARP, CHPlus, and Essential Plan programs only.

Reimbursement Policy	
Subject: Modifiers 50 and 51: Multiple and Bilateral Surgery	
Policy Number: G-06010	Policy Section: Coding
Last Approval Date: 08/25/2023	Effective Date: 11/25/2020

**** Visit our provider website for the most current version of the reimbursement policies. If you are using a printed version of this policy, please verify the information by going to providerpublic.mybcbswny.com. ****

Disclaimer

These reimbursement policies serve as a guide to assist you in accurate claims submissions and to outline the basis for reimbursement if Highmark BCBS covered the service for the member's benefit plan. The determination that a service, procedure, item, etc. is covered under a member's benefit plan is not a determination that you will be reimbursed. Services must meet authorization and medical necessity guidelines appropriate to the procedure and diagnosis as well as to the member's state of residence.

You must follow proper billing and submission guidelines. You are required to use industry standard, compliant codes on all claim submissions. Services should be billed with Current Procedure Terminology® (CPT) codes, Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) codes, and/or revenue codes. These codes denote the services and/or procedures performed and, when billed, must be fully supported in the medical record and/or office notes. Unless otherwise noted within the policy, our reimbursement policies apply to both participating and non-participating professional providers and facilities.

If appropriate coding/billing guidelines or current reimbursement policies are not followed, Highmark BCBS may:

- Reject or deny the claim.
- Recover and/or recoup claim payment.
- Adjust the reimbursement to reflect the appropriate services and/or procedures performed.

These reimbursement policies may be superseded by mandates in provider, state, federal, or Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) contracts and/or requirements. Highmark BCBS strives to minimize delays in policy implementation. If there is a delay, we reserve the right to recoup and/or recover claims payment to the effective date in accordance with the

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policy. We reserve the right to review and revise these policies when necessary. When there is an update, we will publish the most current policy to the website.

Policy

Highmark BCBS allows reimbursement for multiple and bilateral surgery unless provider, state, federal, or CMS contracts and/or requirements indicate otherwise. Reimbursement to both professional and facility providers is based on multiple and bilateral procedure rules in accordance with contracts and/or state guidelines for applicable surgical procedures.

Multiple surgery

Separate reimbursement is allowed for multiple procedures performed on the same day or same session by the same provider. The following reductions apply to both professional and facility claims. Reimbursement is the total of:

- 100% of the fee schedule or contracted/negotiated rate for the highest valued procedure.
- 50% for the secondary through the fifth procedures.
- 50% for the sixth and additional procedures, only if determined to be medically necessary through clinical review.

A single surgery procedure is subject to a multiple procedure reduction when submitted with multiple units.

Professional provider claims for applicable surgical procedures must be billed with Modifier 51 to denote a multiple procedure. Facility claims should not be billed with Modifier 51.

Bilateral surgery

A bilateral surgery that uses a unilateral code should be reported on a single line with Modifier 50 for professional and facility provider claims. Reimbursement is 150% of the fee schedule or contracted/negotiated rate of the procedure.

When a surgical procedure code contains the terminology bilateral, or unilateral or bilateral, or the code is considered inherently bilateral, modifiers LT, RT, or 50 should not be appended. Reimbursement is based on 100% of the fee schedule or contracted/negotiated rate for the procedure.

Claims with applicable surgical procedures billed without the correct modifier to denote a multiple or bilateral procedure may be denied. If more than one bilateral procedure or multiple and bilateral procedures are performed in the same operative session, multiple procedure reductions apply.

Related Coding

Standard correct coding applies

Policy History

08/25/2023	Review approved: updated policy title to include Modifiers 50 and 51 and removed <i>Professional and Facility Reimbursement</i>
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11/25/2020	Review approved and effective: updated policy language to CMS alignment same day or same session; updated Definition and Reference Material sections
12/21/2018	Review approved: policy template updated
02/23/2018	Review approved and effective: multiple units policy language added
01/01/2017	Initial approval and effective

References and Research Materials	
<p>This policy has been developed through consideration of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMS • National Uniform Billing Committee Guidelines • Optum EncoderPro 2023 • State contract • State Medicaid 	

Definitions	
Bilateral	Bilateral procedures are performed on both sides of the body during the same operative session.
Modifier 50	Bilateral Procedure: Unless otherwise identified in the listings, bilateral procedures that are performed at the same sessions, should be identified by adding Modifier 50 to the appropriate 5-digit code. Note: This modifier should not be appended to designated add-on codes.
Modifier 51	When multiple procedures, other than E/M services, physical medicine and rehabilitation services or provision of supplies (e.g., vaccines), are performed at the same session by the same individual, the primary procedure or service may be reported as listed. The additional procedure(s) or service(s) may be identified by appending Modifier 51 to the additional procedure or service code(s). Note: This modifier should not be appended to designated add-on codes.
Modifier LT	left side (used to identify procedures performed on the left side of the body)
Modifier RT	right side (used to identify procedures performed on the right side of the body)
Multiple Surgeries	distinct surgical procedures performed by a provider on the same patient during the same operative session
Unilateral	Unilateral procedures are procedures performed on one side of the body
General Reimbursement Policy Definitions	

Related Policies and Materials
Modifiers 80, 81, 82 and AS: Assistant at Surgery
Modifiers LT and RT: Left Side/Right Side Procedures
Modifier Usage
Multiple Delivery Services
Multiple Procedure Payment Reduction

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