



# Bilateral Procedures

Reimbursement Policy ID: RPC.0006.1200

Recent review date: 12/2023

Next review date: 10/2025

*AmeriHealth Caritas North Carolina reimbursement policies and their resulting edits are based on guidelines from established industry sources, such as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the American Medical Association (AMA), state and federal regulatory agencies, and medical specialty professional societies. Reimbursement policies are intended as a general reference and do not constitute a contract or other guarantee of payment. AmeriHealth Caritas North Carolina may use reasonable discretion in interpreting and applying its policies to services provided in a particular case and may modify its policies at any time.*

*In making claim payment determinations, the health plan also uses coding terminology and methodologies based on accepted industry standards, including Current Procedural Terminology (CPT); the Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS); and the International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-10-CM), and other relevant sources. Other factors that may affect payment include medical record documentation, legislative or regulatory mandates, a provider's contract, a member's eligibility in receiving covered services, submission of clean claims, and other health plan policies, and other relevant factors. These factors may supplement, modify, or in some cases supersede reimbursement policies.*

*This reimbursement policy applies to all health care services billed on a CMS-1500 form or its electronic equivalent, or when billed on a UB-04 form or its electronic equivalent.*

## Policy Overview

A bilateral procedure is a procedure performed on identical anatomic sites, on opposite sides of the body (mirror image) that are performed during the same operative session, or on the same day by the same provider.

AmeriHealth Caritas North Carolina recognizes modifier 50 and adjusts reimbursement accordingly when appended to a service to indicate that a bilateral, as described above, has been performed.

## Exceptions

The use of modifier 50 is not applicable with procedures or codes that are bilateral in intent or that have bilateral in their description. Some examples of descriptions may include the terms "unilateral or bilateral," "one or both," and "bilateral."

## Reimbursement Guidelines

AmeriHealth Caritas North Carolina determines whether claims are eligible for reimbursement for bilateral surgery based on the “Bilateral Surgery” indicator in the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Database (MPFSDB).

- 0 indicates a unilateral code; modifier 50 will not be reimbursed.
- 1 indicates modifier 50 may be reimbursable.
- 2 indicates a bilateral code; modifier 50 is not eligible for reimbursement.
- 3 indicates a primary radiology code; modifier 50 is not eligible for reimbursement.
- 9 indicates that the concept of a bilateral procedure does not apply.

Indicator “1” on procedure codes are considered eligible for bilateral services reimbursement and must be submitted as a **one-line entry** with modifier 50 and units = 1 to be reimbursed. Allowed procedure codes submitted with modifier 50 will be reimbursed at 150% of the North Carolina Medicaid fee schedule.

## Definitions

### Bilateral Procedure

The same procedure that is performed on both the left and the right side of a patient’s body during the same operative session or on the same day.

### Modifier

An indicator used in conjunction with a CPT code to denote that a service or procedure that has been performed has been altered by a circumstance without changing the definition of the CPT code.

## Edit Sources

- I. Current Procedural Terminology (CPT).
- II. Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS),
- III. International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD), and associated publications and services.
- IV. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).
- V. <https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/providers/fee-schedules/physician-services-fee-schedules-archive>
- VI. Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Database. <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-Fee-for-Service-Payment/PFSlookup>

## Attachments

N/A

## Associated Policies

N/A

## Policy History

04/2024	Revised preamble
12/2023	Reimbursement Policy Committee Approval
12/2023	Annual review - No major changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Updated to Biennial policy</li></ul>

08/2023	Removal of policy implemented by AmeriHealth Caritas North Carolina from Policy History section
06/2023	Reimbursement Policy Committee Approval
01/2023	<p>Template revised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preamble revised.</li> <li>• Applicable Claim Types table removed.</li> <li>• Coding section renamed to Reimbursement Guidelines</li> <li>• Associated Policies section added</li> </ul>