



Bone Cancers

Quick Reference Guide

2026

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1 CLINICAL SNAPSHOT

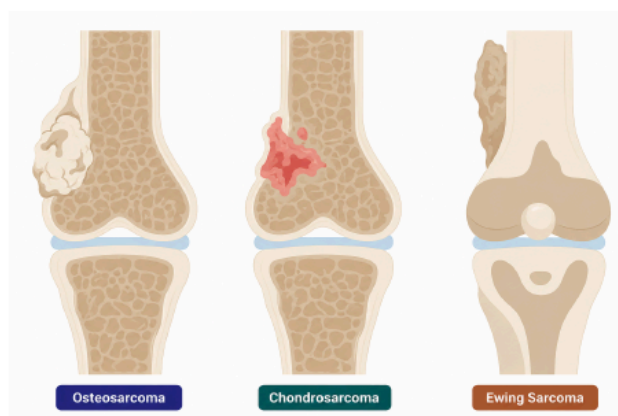
Definition: 'Bone cancer' in clinical and coding practice encompasses **two fundamentally distinct disease categories**.^{1,2} **Primary bone malignancies** originate in bone tissue itself and include **osteosarcoma** (bimodal age distribution with primary peak in adolescents/young adults and second peak in **adults 60+** frequently associated with Paget disease or prior radiation), **chondrosarcoma** (most common primary bone cancer in **adults >40**; largely chemoresistant with surgical resection as cornerstone; ivosidenib for IDH1 mutations), **Ewing sarcoma** (predominantly AYA; essentially absent in patients 65+), and **chordoma** (rare axial tumor of notochordal origin; median age at diagnosis approximately 60 years; incidence 0.08 per 100,000).¹⁻⁴ **Metastatic bone disease**, cancer spread from a primary site to bone, is **far more common in the Medicare population**, with lung, prostate, breast, and kidney as the dominant sources.⁵

ICD-10 Codes:

Primary bone cancer uses **C40.0x-C40.9x** (limbs; require bone group **AND** laterality digit **0**=unspecified/**1**=right/**2**=left) and **C41.0-C41.9** (axial/other; no laterality digit). Secondary bone cancer uses **C79.51** (bone metastases) and **C79.52** (bone marrow metastases), **always** paired with the primary site code (e.g., **C50.x** breast, **C61** prostate, **C34.x** lung, **C64** kidney).⁶ **NOTE:** Multiple myeloma uses **C90.0x**, **NOT C79.51**, because **bone destruction** is inherent to myeloma rather than metastasis.^{6,7} **Complications:** **M84.5xx** (pathologic fracture in neoplastic disease, frequently undercoded); **G95.20** (spinal cord compression, oncologic emergency code). Personal history **Z85.830** applies **only** after treatment is complete and there is **no active disease**.

Prevalence and Burden: The American Cancer Society projected approximately **3,770 new** primary bone and joint cancer cases and **2,190 deaths** in the United States in 2025, **less than 0.2% of all cancers**.⁸ Primary bone cancer incidence is approximately 1 case per 100,000 persons per year.⁴ **In the Medicare-age population**, however, metastatic bone disease **vastly outnumbers primary bone cancer** in clinical frequency, with approximately 400,000 new cases of bone metastases diagnosed annually in the US versus fewer than 4,000 primary bone cancers.^{9,10} This disparity drives the **NCCN age-stratified workup rule**:¹ patients **age <40** with a suspicious bone lesion are **referred directly to orthopedic oncology**, while patients **age 40+** undergo a **metastatic workup first** (bone scan or FDG-PET/CT, SPEP, PSA, mammogram, CT chest/abdomen/pelvis). By subtype, 5-year relative survival is approximately **54% for osteosarcoma** (60% for age <30, 30% for age 50+), **75% for chondrosarcoma**, **51% for Ewing sarcoma**, and **68% for chordoma**.¹¹⁻¹³ The age-adjusted incidence of de novo bone metastases increased from **18.04 to 20.89 per 100,000** between 2010 and 2018 (APC 2.3%), reflecting a **growing burden of metastatic bone disease**.¹⁴

Primary Bone Cancer Subtypes



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