



AAVBC

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF VALUE BASED CARE

Soft Tissue Sarcoma

Quick Reference Guide

2026

Table of Contents

1. CLINICAL SNAPSHOT	3
HCC/RAF V28 Mapping	4
2. RECOGNITION AND DIAGNOSIS	6
Medicare Screenings and Surveillance (Adult and Geriatric)	6
Subtle Early Signs in Older Adults (>65)	8
Geriatric Risk Factors	8
Diagnostic Thresholds (AAFP Red Flags, AJCC 8th Ed, FNCLCC Grade)	9
Clues to Dig Deeper	13
Common Oversights	14
Key Differentials in Elderly	14
Comorbidity Screening	15
3. MEAT DOCUMENTATION ESSENTIALS	18
Clinical Documentation Elements	19
Reframing Common Documentation Shortcuts	20
4. TREATMENT AND REFERRAL QUICK GUIDE	21
Therapy Escalation Criteria	21
NCCN-Aligned Treatment by Stage, Histotype, and Patient Profile	22
Non-Pharmacologic Care and Supportive Interventions	24
Medication Safety and Key Interactions	25
When to Refer	25
Follow-Up Timing	26
Comorbidity Management	27
Cost-Smart Options	28
Patient Education and Adherence	29
Quality Metrics Tie-In	30
5. CODING REMINDERS AND CASE EXAMPLES	32
Coding Specificity	32
Annual Clinical Review and Confirmation	33
Good Documentation - EHR Tips	34
Brief Case Example	35
REFERENCES	36

1 CLINICAL SNAPSHOT

Definition: **Soft tissue sarcomas** (STS) are a rare and biologically heterogeneous group of malignancies arising from **mesenchymal connective tissues** (fat, muscle, nerves, tendons, blood vessels, and deep skin structures) most commonly in the **extremities, trunk, retroperitoneum, and abdomen**.¹ The **2020 WHO Classification of Tumours of Soft Tissue and Bone** (5th edition) recognizes more than **50** distinct subtypes organized by line of differentiation, including **undifferentiated pleomorphic sarcoma, liposarcoma, leiomyosarcoma, gastrointestinal stromal tumor (GIST), and Kaposi sarcoma**.^{2,3} There is **no single 'sarcoma' presentation**: each subtype carries distinct biology and treatment pathways, so histotype and anatomic site drive management.³⁻⁵

ICD-10 Codes:

Confirmed soft tissue sarcoma is reported with **site- and laterality-specific codes** in the **C49** series (malignant neoplasm of connective and soft tissue): **C49.0** (head/face/neck), **C49.11/C49.12** (right/left upper limb), **C49.21/C49.22** (right/left lower limb), **C49.3** (thorax), **C49.4** (abdomen), **C49.5** (pelvis), **C49.6** (trunk, unspecified), and **C49.9** (connective/soft tissue, unspecified; **AVOID** when the site is known).⁶ **GIST** has its own series, **C49.A0-C49.A9** (by site), and should **never be coded under generic C49.x**.⁶ Related sites include retroperitoneum and peritoneum (**C48.0-C48.2**), peripheral nerves (**C47.-**), and Kaposi sarcoma (**C46.-**).⁶ Two codes are **interim only**: **R22.-** (localized swelling/mass, by site) while a suspicious mass awaits biopsy, and **D48.1** (uncertain behavior) for indeterminate pathology; **D17.-** (benign lipoma) should **not** be assigned to a **mass under evaluation for malignancy**.⁶ After treatment, **Z85.831** documents personal history of soft tissue malignancy and supports medical necessity for surveillance.⁶

Prevalence and Burden: STS accounts for approximately **1%** of all adult cancers, with an overall age-adjusted incidence of about **5.9 per 100,000** persons that rises to roughly **18.2 per 100,000** in adults over age 70 – approximately threefold the general-population rate.⁷ This is fundamentally a disease of older adults: about **60%** of STS cases occur in patients aged **65 years or older**, and the modal decade of diagnosis is the eighth decade of life.^{8,9} In the United States, an estimated **13,520** new cases of soft tissue sarcoma (including heart) and **5,410** deaths were projected for 2025.¹⁰ The rising incidence in the elderly is driven primarily by leiomyosarcoma, liposarcoma, and fibrohistiocytic tumors.⁷

AAVBC Knowledge Hub Premium Content Access

Continue reading your guide
with an AAVBC subscription

[Subscribe Now](#)

Already a subscriber? [Sign in](#)

Limited offer

Basic Membership Free

Includes access to downloadable Quick Reference Guides, mailing list for industry updates/medical information, research toolkits, AAVBC events and so much more!

Cancel at any time