AAVBC
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF VALUE BASED CARE

Gallbladder Cancer

Quick Reference Guide

2026

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1 CLINICAL SNAPSHOT

Definition: **Gallbladder cancer** (GBC) is a rare but aggressive malignancy that arises in the inner lining of the gallbladder, most often as adenocarcinoma.[1,2] Because the organ sits **hidden beneath the liver**, early-stage disease is typically asymptomatic or produces **vague symptoms that mimic benign biliary colic**, so most cases are diagnosed at an **advanced stage**.[1,2] Approximately **50%** of cases are discovered incidentally during or after cholecystectomy for presumed benign disease (incidental gallbladder cancer; IGBC).[3] Only about **10%** of patients present with early-stage **resectable disease**.[3] GBC is strongly **age-associated**: it is predominantly a disease of **older adults** and is highly relevant to the **Medicare population**, which makes **primary care recognition** and **prompt referral** the central upstream behaviors in this pathway.[1,2]

ICD-10 Codes:

The primary ICD-10 code for gallbladder cancer is **C23** (malignant neoplasm of gallbladder).[4] Related biliary tract codes include **C24.0** (extrahepatic bile duct, including cystic duct), **C24.8** (overlapping sites of biliary tract), **C24.9** (biliary tract, unspecified → **AVOID** when the gallbladder is the known primary), and **C22.1** (intrahepatic cholangiocarcinoma).[4] **D01.5** (carcinoma in situ of liver, gallbladder, and bile ducts) corresponds to **high-grade dysplasia or carcinoma in situ** and is **not mapped** to an HCC.[4] When disease has spread, code the metastatic site **alongside the primary**: **C78.7** (secondary neoplasm of liver) and **C78.00-C78.02** (secondary neoplasm of lung). Use **Z85.09** (personal history of malignant neoplasm of other digestive organs) only **after treatment is complete** with no evidence of disease → **C23 must remain the active code** throughout the treatment continuum.[4]

Incidence and burden: For 2026 the American Cancer Society groups gallbladder with nearby large bile duct cancers, estimating about **12,640** new cases and approximately **4,590** deaths.[5] GBC is one of the few cancers **more common in women than men**, with females accounting for approximately **two-thirds** of all cases and deaths.[6,7] Incidence rises steeply with age, with patients **65 and older accounting for roughly two-thirds** of all diagnoses, with peak prevalence between ages **80 and 90**.[8] Marked **racial and ethnic disparities exist**: American Indian/Alaska Native populations have roughly **3 times** the incidence of non-Hispanic White populations, Hispanic/Latina women have an incidence of **2.5 per 100,000** (double that of non-Hispanic White women), and non-Hispanic Black incidence rose **1.4-2.1% annually** from 2001 to 2014.[6,9–11]