MUE Cheat Sheets for Dermatology Billing

What are MUEs?

Medically Unlikely Edits (MUEs) are CMS-established maximum units of service that a provider would report under most circumstances for a single beneficiary on a single date of service. MUE values help prevent billing errors and potential fraud.

Destruction Procedures

Benign/Premalignant Lesions

CPT Code	Description	MUE Value	Notes
17000	Destruction, premalignant lesions (first)	1	First lesion only
17003	Destruction, premalignant lesions (2-14)	13	Report per additional lesion
17004	Destruction, premalignant lesions (15+)	1	Flat rate for 15+ lesions
17110	Destruction, benign lesions (≤14)	1	Per session, not per lesion
17111	Destruction, benign lesions (≥15)	1	Per session

Key Tips:

17000 and 17003 are for **premalignant** lesions (e.g., actinic keratosis)
17110/17111 are for **benign** lesions (e.g., seborrheic keratosis)
Document number and location of all lesions treated

Malignant Lesions

| CPT Code | Description | MUE Value | Notes |

|----------|-------------|-----------|-------|

| **17260** | Destruction, malignant lesion, trunk/arms/legs (0.5 cm or less) | 3 | Per lesion |

| **17261** | Destruction, malignant lesion, trunk/arms/legs (0.6-1.0 cm) | 3 | Per lesion |

| **17262** | Destruction, malignant lesion, trunk/arms/legs (1.1-2.0 cm) | 3 | Per lesion |

| **17263** | Destruction, malignant lesion, trunk/arms/legs (2.1-3.0 cm) | 2 | Per lesion |

| **17264** | Destruction, malignant lesion, trunk/arms/legs (3.1-4.0 cm) | 2 | Per lesion |

| **17266** | Destruction, malignant lesion, trunk/arms/legs (>4.0 cm) | 2 | Per lesion |

| CPT Code | Description | MUE Value | Notes |

|----------|-------------|-----------|-------|

| **17270** | Destruction, malignant lesion, scalp/neck/hands/feet/genitalia (0.5 cm or less) | 3 | Per lesion |

| **17271** | Destruction, malignant lesion, scalp/neck/hands/feet/genitalia (0.6-1.0 cm) | 3 | Per lesion |

| **17272** | Destruction, malignant lesion, scalp/neck/hands/feet/genitalia (1.1-2.0 cm) | 3 | Per lesion |

| **17273** | Destruction, malignant lesion, scalp/neck/hands/feet/genitalia (2.1-3.0 cm) | 2 | Per lesion |

| **17274** | Destruction, malignant lesion, scalp/neck/hands/feet/genitalia (3.1-4.0 cm) | 2 | Per lesion |

| **17276** | Destruction, malignant lesion, scalp/neck/hands/feet/genitalia (>4.0 cm) | 2 | Per lesion |

Key Tips:

- Always measure and document lesion size **before** destruction
- Choose code based on anatomic location and size
- Pathology must confirm malignancy

Skin Biopsies

CPT Code	Description	MUE Value	Notes
11102	Tangential biopsy (first lesion)	1	Single lesion
11103	Tangential biopsy (each additional)	4	Add-on code
11104	Punch biopsy (first lesion)	1	Single lesion
11105	Punch biopsy (each additional)	4	Add-on code
11106	Incisional biopsy (first lesion)	1	Single lesion
11107	Incisional biopsy (each additional)	4	Add-on code

Key Tips:

- Report only **one** primary biopsy code (11102, 11104, or 11106) per date of service
- Use add-on codes (11103, 11105, 11107) for additional lesions of the same technique
- Document biopsy technique, site, and clinical indication

Excision of Benign Lesions

Trunk, Arms, Legs, Scalp, Neck, Hands, Feet

CPT Code	Description	MUE Value	Notes
11400	Excision, benign lesion (0.5 cm or less)	4	Includes margins
11401	Excision, benign lesion (0.6-1.0 cm)	4	Includes margins
11402	Excision, benign lesion (1.1-2.0 cm)	3	Includes margins
11403	Excision, benign lesion (2.1-3.0 cm)	3	Includes margins
11404	Excision, benign lesion (3.1-4.0 cm)	2	Includes margins
11406	Excision, benign lesion (>4.0 cm)	2	Includes margins

Face, Ears, Eyelids, Nose, Lips, Mucous Membranes

CPT Code	Description	MUE Value	Notes
11440	Excision, benign lesion, face (0.5 cm or less)	4	Includes margins
11441	Excision, benign lesion, face (0.6-1.0 cm)	4	Includes margins
11442	Excision, benign lesion, face (1.1-2.0 cm)	3	Includes margins
11443	Excision, benign lesion, face (2.1-3.0 cm)	2	Includes margins
11444	Excision, benign lesion, face (3.1-4.0 cm)	2	Includes margins
11446	Excision, benign lesion, face (>4.0 cm)	1	Includes margins

Key Tips:

Measure **excised diameter** including margins, not just the lesion
Document pre-excision and post-excision measurements
Pathology should confirm benign diagnosis

Excision of Malignant Lesions

Trunk, Arms, Legs, Scalp, Neck, Hands, Feet

CPT Code	Description	MUE Value	Notes
11600	Excision, malignant lesion (0.5 cm or less)	4	Includes margins
11601	Excision, malignant lesion (0.6-1.0 cm)	4	Includes margins
11602	Excision, malignant lesion (1.1-2.0 cm)	3	Includes margins
11603	Excision, malignant lesion (2.1-3.0 cm)	3	Includes margins
11604	Excision, malignant lesion (3.1-4.0 cm)	2	Includes margins
11606	Excision, malignant lesion (>4.0 cm)	2	Includes margins

Face, Ears, Eyelids, Nose, Lips, Mucous Membranes

CPT Code	Description	MUE Value	Notes
11640	Excision, malignant lesion, face (0.5 cm or less)	4	Includes margins
11641	Excision, malignant lesion, face (0.6-1.0 cm)	4	Includes margins
11642	Excision, malignant lesion, face (1.1-2.0 cm)	3	Includes margins
11643	Excision, malignant lesion, face (2.1-3.0 cm)	2	Includes margins
11644	Excision, malignant lesion, face (3.1-4.0 cm)	2	Includes margins
11646	Excision, malignant lesion, face (>4.0 cm)	1	Includes margins

Key Tips:

- Pathology must confirm malignancy (can use pre-biopsy or post-excision path)
- Measure total excised diameter including margins
- Higher MUE values allow for multiple malignancies on same date

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Mohs Micrographic Surgery

| CPT Code | Description | MUE Value | Notes |

|----------|-------------|-----------|-------|

| **17311** | Mohs, first stage (up to 5 tissue blocks) | 2 | Per stage |

| **17312** | Mohs, each additional stage (up to 5 blocks) | 4 | Add-on code |

| **17313** | Mohs, first stage (6-10 tissue blocks) | 2 | Per stage |

| **17314** | Mohs, each additional stage (6-10 blocks) | 4 | Add-on code |

| **17315** | Mohs, each additional block >10 | 4 | Add-on code |

Key Tips:

Document each stage separately with tissue blocks
MUE of 2 for first stage allows bilateral procedures
Reconstruction codes billed separately

Skin Tags

| CPT Code | Description | MUE Value | Notes |

|----------|-------------|-----------|-------|

| **11200** | Removal of skin tags (up to 15) | 1 | First 15 lesions |

| **11201** | Removal of skin tags (each additional 10) | 3 | Add-on code |

Key Tips:

11200 covers up to 15 skin tags
11201 reported for each additional 10 beyond the first 15
Example: 27 skin tags = 11200 x1, 11201 x2

Wound Repair (Simple)

| CPT Code | Description | MUE Value | Notes |

|----------|-------------|-----------|-------|

| **12001** | Simple repair, scalp/neck/trunk (2.5 cm or less) | 2 | Per wound |

| **12002** | Simple repair, scalp/neck/trunk (2.6-7.5 cm) | 2 | Per wound |

| **12004** | Simple repair, scalp/neck/trunk (7.6-12.5 cm) | 2 | Per wound |

| **12005** | Simple repair, scalp/neck/trunk (12.6-20.0 cm) | 2 | Per wound |

| **12006** | Simple repair, scalp/neck/trunk (20.1-30.0 cm) | 2 | Per wound |

| **12011** | Simple repair, face/ears/eyelids/nose/lips (2.5 cm or less) | 2 | Per wound |

| **12013** | Simple repair, face/ears/eyelids/nose/lips (2.6-5.0 cm) | 2 | Per wound |

| **12014** | Simple repair, face/ears/eyelids/nose/lips (5.1-7.5 cm) | 2 | Per wound |

| **12015** | Simple repair, face/ears/eyelids/nose/lips (7.6-12.5 cm) | 2 | Per wound |

| **12016** | Simple repair, face/ears/eyelids/nose/lips (12.6-20.0 cm) | 2 | Per wound |

| **12017** | Simple repair, face/ears/eyelids/nose/lips (20.1-30.0 cm) | 1 | Per wound |

Key Tips:

> Sum lengths of wounds in same anatomic grouping and complexity
> MUE of 2 allows for bilateral or multiple separate body areas
> Simple repair = single layer closure

Wound Repair (Intermediate)

| CPT Code | Description | MUE Value | Notes |

|----------|-------------|-----------|-------|

| **12031** | Intermediate repair, scalp/neck/trunk (2.5 cm or less) | 2 | Layered closure |

| **12032** | Intermediate repair, scalp/neck/trunk (2.6-7.5 cm) | 2 | Layered closure |

| **12034** | Intermediate repair, scalp/neck/trunk (7.6-12.5 cm) | 2 | Layered closure |

| **12035** | Intermediate repair, scalp/neck/trunk (12.6-20.0 cm) | 2 | Layered closure |

| **12036** | Intermediate repair, scalp/neck/trunk (20.1-30.0 cm) | 2 | Layered closure |

| **12041** | Intermediate repair, face/ears/eyelids/nose/lips (2.5 cm or less) | 2 | Layered closure |

| **12042** | Intermediate repair, face/ears/eyelids/nose/lips (2.6-5.0 cm) | 2 | Layered closure |

| **12044** | Intermediate repair, face/ears/eyelids/nose/lips (5.1-7.5 cm) | 2 | Layered closure |

| **12045** | Intermediate repair, face/ears/eyelids/nose/lips (7.6-12.5 cm) | 2 | Layered closure |

| **12046** | Intermediate repair, face/ears/eyelids/nose/lips (12.6-20.0 cm) | 2 | Layered closure |

| **12047** | Intermediate repair, face/ears/eyelids/nose/lips (20.1-30.0 cm) | 1 | Layered closure |

Key Tips:

> Intermediate = layered closure or contaminated wounds requiring extensive cleaning
> Document layered closure technique in operative note
> Cannot bill both simple and intermediate for same wound

Nail Procedures

| CPT Code | Description | MUE Value | Notes |

|----------|-------------|-----------|-------|

| **11719** | Trimming of nails (any number) | 1 | Per encounter |

| **11720** | Debridement of nail(s) (1-5) | 1 | Manual, any method |

| **11721** | Debridement of nail(s) (6+) | 1 | Manual, any method |

| **11730** | Avulsion of nail plate (partial/complete) | 2 | Simple, single |

| **11732** | Avulsion of nail plate (each additional) | 3 | Add-on code |

| **11750** | Excision of nail and nail matrix (permanent) | 2 | Includes phenol/chemical |

| **11755** | Biopsy of nail unit | 2 | Any method |

| **11765** | Wedge excision of skin of nail fold | 2 | Per digit |

Key Tips:

11730 MUE of 2 allows for bilateral great toenails
11750 is for permanent nail removal (matrixectomy)
Document medical necessity for nail procedures

Cryotherapy/Electrosurgery

| CPT Code | Description | MUE Value | Notes |

|----------|-------------|-----------|-------|

| **17340** | Cryotherapy, benign lesions (other than skin tags/warts) | 1 | Per session |

| **17360** | Chemical exfoliation for acne | 1 | Per session |

| **17380** | Electrolysis epilation (30 min) | 1 | First 30 minutes |

| **17381** | Electrolysis epilation (each additional 30 min) | 2 | Add-on code |

Shaving of Lesions

| CPT Code | Description | MUE Value | Notes |

|----------|-------------|-----------|-------|

| **11300** | Shaving, trunk/arms/legs (0.5 cm or less) | 4 | Per lesion |

| **11301** | Shaving, trunk/arms/legs (0.6-1.0 cm) | 4 | Per lesion |

| **11302** | Shaving, trunk/arms/legs (1.1-2.0 cm) | 3 | Per lesion |

| **11303** | Shaving, trunk/arms/legs (>2.0 cm) | 2 | Per lesion |

| **11310** | Shaving, face/ears/eyelids/nose/lips (0.5 cm or less) | 4 | Per lesion |

| **11311** | Shaving, face/ears/eyelids/nose/lips (0.6-1.0 cm) | 4 | Per lesion |

| **11312** | Shaving, face/ears/eyelids/nose/lips (1.1-2.0 cm) | 3 | Per lesion |

| **11313** | Shaving, face/ears/eyelids/nose/lips (>2.0 cm) | 2 | Per lesion |

Key Tips:

Shaving = tangential removal through epidermis/dermis without full-thickness excision
Measure lesion diameter (not depth)
Send all specimens to pathology

Common Billing Pitfalls to Avoid

1. **Exceeding MUE Values**
Review total units before submitting claims
Document medical necessity if approaching MUE limits
Use modifiers appropriately when medically necessary (76, 77, 59)

2. **Incorrect Lesion Measurements**
Always measure BEFORE treatment
For excisions: measure total diameter including margins
For destruction: measure lesion size only
Document all measurements in the medical record

3. **Missing Documentation**
Describe each lesion: location, size, appearance
Document technique used
Include pathology reports or clinical diagnosis
Note medical necessity for each procedure

4. **Coding Errors**
Don't confuse benign vs. premalignant vs. malignant codes
Verify anatomic location matches code description
Sum repair lengths correctly by anatomic area and complexity

5. **Modifier Misuse**
Modifier 59: Use only when procedures are distinct/separate

Modifier 25: E/M on same day as procedure (significant, separately identifiable)
Modifier 51: Multiple procedures (usually auto-applied by payer)

Quick Reference: MUE Adjudication Indicators

MUE Adjudication Indicator (MAI) Definitions:

MAI-1: MUE adjudicated as claim line edit (hard limit - rarely appropriate to exceed)
MAI-2: MUE adjudicated as claim line edit (may be exceeded with appropriate modifier)
MAI-3: MUE adjudicated as date of service edit (cumulative across all claim lines)

Most dermatology codes have MAI-2 or MAI-3, allowing flexibility with proper documentation and modifiers.

Resources

CMS MUE Files: Updated quarterly at cms.gov
CPT Manual: Annual updates from AMA
LCD/NCD: Check local/national coverage determinations
Coding Guidelines: AAD (American Academy of Dermatology)

Best Practices Summary

✓ **Measure and document** all lesion sizes before treatment

✓ **Verify pathology** for malignant lesion codes

✓ **Keep MUE values** readily accessible during coding

✓ **Use modifiers appropriately** when exceeding MUEs is medically necessary

✓ **Review claims** before submission to catch errors

✓ **Stay updated** on quarterly MUE changes from CMS

✓ **Document thoroughly** to support medical necessity

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Note: MUE values are updated quarterly by CMS. Always verify current values at cms.gov/mue