Facts about major depression
- Suicide rates are almost twice as high in the elderly, with the rate highest for white men over 85 years of age.¹
- Older adults who commit suicide have seen a clinician within the previous month.¹

Major depressive disorder
According to the American Psychiatric Association, major depressive disorder can be seen in patients who have suffered a depressive episode lasting at least two weeks, as manifested by at least five of the following symptoms: depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure in most or all activities, insomnia or hypersomnia, significant weight loss or weight gain or decrease or increase in appetite, psychomotor retardation or agitation, fatigue or low energy, poor concentration, thoughts of worthlessness or guilt, and recurrent thoughts about death or suicidal ideation.

Major depressive disorder
- F32.0 Major depressive disorder, single episode, mild
- F32.1 Major depressive disorder, single episode, moderate
- F32.2 Major depressive disorder, single episode, severe without psychotic features
- F32.3 Major depressive disorder, single episode, severe with psychotic features
- F32.8 Other depressive episodes
- F32.9 Major depressive disorder, single episode, unspecified

Documentation tips¹³
When documenting major depressive disorder, the provider must document:
- Episode
  - Single
  - Recurrent
- Severity
  - Mild
  - Moderate
  - Severe without psychotic features
  - Severe with psychotic features
- Or, clinical status of the current episode
  - Partial remission
  - Full remission

If psychotic features are present and documented, assign the code for “with psychotic features” regardless of episode severity.¹

Recurrent major depression
Major depression is highly recurrent, with recurrent episodes occurring in 50% or more of patients. An episode is considered recurrent when there is an interval of at least 2 consecutive months between separate episodes during which criteria are not met for a major depressive episode.

Recurrent major depression³
- F33.0 Major depressive episode, recurrent, mild
- F33.1 Major depressive episode, recurrent, moderate
- F33.2 Major depressive episode, recurrent, severe without psychotic features
- F33.3 Major depressive episode, recurrent, severe with psychotic features
- F33.8 Other recurrent depressive disorders
- F33.9 Major depressive disorder, recurrent, unspecified

Chronic major depression
An episode persisting for at least two years is deemed chronic.

Major depression in remission
Whether or not a patient is being treated for depression (i.e., counseling and/or medication), in partial remission is defined as symptoms of the immediately previous major depressive episode are present, but full criteria are not met, or there is a period lasting less than 2 months without any significant symptoms of a major depressive episode. In full remission is defined as no significant signs or symptoms of the disturbance were present during the past 2 months. When reporting history of major depressive disorder, instead of coding Z96.59 Personal history of other mental and behavioral disorders, consider using a code from the mental disorders chapter with the fifth character for in remission.¹³

Chronic major depression
- F32.4 Major depressive disorder, single episode, in partial remission
- F32.5 Major depressive disorder, single episode, in full remission
- F33.40 Major depressive disorder, recurrent, in remission, unspecified
- F33.41 Major depressive disorder, recurrent, in partial remission
- F33.42 Major depressive disorder, recurrent, in full remission

Screening for depression
Screening for depression is a component of the Annual Wellness Visit (AWV). Document the review of potential risk factors for depression and the results of the screening. Billing for the depression screening administered as part of the initial AWV with HCPCS code G0438. Providers can bill for subsequent AWVs that include depression screening with HCPCS code G0444. There are a number of evidence-based medical tools effective in screening for depression. The Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) is an example of a screening tool.