

Medicare Reimbursement Trends for Common Foot and Ankle Surgeries: An Analysis from 2006 to 2024 and Projections Through 2029

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INTRODUCTION: Foot and ankle surgeries address a variety of pathologies, but reimbursement trends for these procedures remain underexplored. This study examines Medicare reimbursement trends for the five most common and two emerging foot and ankle procedures from 2006 to 2024, adjusting for inflation to assess financial sustainability and its potential impact on clinical practice.

METHODS: Medicare reimbursement data was collected from the CMS Physician Fee Schedule (PFS) from 2006–2024. The seven most frequently performed foot and ankle procedures were identified using the PearlDiver M165Ortho dataset. Total and work reimbursement rates were calculated by multiplying total and work relative value units (RVUs) with CMS conversion factors, adjusted for inflation to 2024 USD using the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Trends were assessed using Microsoft Excel, with percentage changes assessed from 2006 values and five-year projections for 2029 generated using historical means \pm SD (2020-2024).

RESULTS: Inflation-adjusted total reimbursements declined by 39.1% from 2006 to 2024, with the greatest reductions observed in toe amputation (-65.8%) and hallux valgus correction (-44.2%). Inflation-adjusted work reimbursements decreased by 41.4%, with toe amputation showing the steepest decline (-54.7%) followed by hallux valgus correction (49.0%). Projections through 2029 suggest continued declines up to 222.4% for total reimbursements, and 40.2% for work reimbursements under a neutral outlook.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: These findings highlight a dramatic decline in inflation-adjusted reimbursement for common foot and ankle procedures. Declining Medicare reimbursements may yield increased surgical volumes, provider burnout, and reduced access to care for Medicare beneficiaries. Policies must address reimbursement sustainability to ensure continued high-quality patient care and equitable access to foot and ankle surgery.

Table 1. Top Common Foot and Ankle Surgeries CPT codes

CPT Code	Description
CPT-28285	Correction, hammer toe (eg, interphalangeal fusion, partial or total phalangectomy)
CPT-28296	Correction, hallux valgus (bunion), with or without sesamoidectomy, with metatarsal osteotomy (eg, Mitchell, Chevron, or concentric type procedure)
CPT-28820	Amputation, toe, metatarsophalangeal joint
CPT-27814	Open treatment of bimalleolar ankle fracture , with or without internal or external fixation
CPT-27292	Open treatment of distal fibular fracture (lateral malleolus), with or without internal or external fixation
CPT-27876	Arthrodesis, ankle, open
CPT-27282	Arthroplasty, ankle, with implant (total ankle)

Table 2. Adjusted and unadjusted Total reimbursement rates in 2006 and 2024, percentage changes, and projections in 2029 for all selected CPT codes. (Five-year projections in 2024 \$ are based on the 2020-2024 values)

CPT Code	Reimbursement		Unadjusted	Adjusted	2029		
	Rate in 2006 (in 2006 \$)	Rate in 2006 (in 2024 \$)			% Change	% Change	Neutral Outlook
CPT-28285 Hammer toe	325.5	364.7	380.5	-22.8%	313.1 (-45.4%)	377.1 (-6.9%)	367.8 (-12.7%)
CPT-28296 Hallux valgus	398.4	924.8	374.8	-44.2%	388.1 (-60.9%)	389.1 (-60.9%)	467.7 (-14.9%)
CPT-28820 Amputation, toe	318.3	744.8	784.7	-45.8%	260.2 (-92.9%)	304.1 (-93.9%)	400.2 (-70.9%)
CPT-27814 Bimalleolar ankle	793.5	1217.6	715.9	-37.6%	464.1 (-47.9%)	507.1 (-50.9%)	658.4 (-17.6%)
CPT-27292 Distal fibular	664.1	916.8	651.1	-38.2%	368.1 (-45.9%)	403.1 (-51.7%)	548.4 (-17.9%)
CPT-27876 Arthrodesis, ankle	1015.7	1172.6	1021.4	-45.3%	464.1 (-41.2%)	667.1 (-35.2%)	878.4 (-12.2%)
CPT-27282 Arthroplasty, ankle	1061.7	1353.6	966.7	-37.9%	372.1 (-65.4%)	277.1 (-73.9%)	367.8 (-72.7%)
Average				-45.8%			

Table 3. Adjusted and unadjusted Work reimbursement rates in 2006 and 2024, percentage changes, and projections in 2029 for all selected CPT codes. (Five-year projections in 2024 \$ are based on the 2020-2024 values)

CPT Code	Reimbursement		Unadjusted	Adjusted	2029		
	Rate in 2006 (in 2006 \$)	Rate in 2006 (in 2024 \$)			% Change	% Change	Neutral Outlook
CPT-28285 Hammer toe	171.6	204.7	210.5	-33.6%	164.1 (-47.9%)	211.1 (-12.9%)	210.2 (-37.9%)
CPT-28296 Hallux valgus	347.5	118.1	274.4	-49.0%	148.1 (-57.9%)	166.1 (-52.9%)	270.4 (-19.9%)
CPT-28820 Amputation, toe	164.7	298.2	318.8	-34.7%	104.1 (-36.9%)	118.1 (-29.9%)	168.4 (-16.9%)
CPT-27814 Bimalleolar ankle	404.8	625.3	323.3	-41.3%	191.1 (-52.9%)	271.1 (-33.9%)	371.1 (-10.9%)
CPT-27292 Distal fibular	269.9	448.7	280.3	-33.3%	133.1 (-50.9%)	151.1 (-44.9%)	201.1 (-26.9%)
CPT-27876 Arthrodesis, ankle	524.4	611.1	512.9	-31.7%	201.1 (-62.9%)	261.1 (-50.9%)	301.1 (-21.9%)
CPT-27282 Arthroplasty, ankle	511.3	611.0	488.8	-41.4%	201.1 (-62.9%)	201.1 (-62.9%)	301.1 (-41.9%)
Average				-37.6%			