



Reporting Guidance for Codes 22554 and 63081 vs 22551 and 22552

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In 2008, the Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®) Editorial Panel was asked by the Relativity Assessment Workgroup of the American Medical Association/Specialty Society Relative Value Scale Update Committee (RUC) to combine a pair of codes into a single code, which would ultimately create a new coding structure. As a result of the 2008 request, two new codes (22551, 22552) were added to the CPT 2011 code set to report arthrodesis that includes disk space preparation, discectomy, osteophyctomy, and decompression of the spinal cord below the second cervical vertebra (C2) and any additional interspace.

In September 2022, codes 22554 and 63081 were the next pair of codes under consideration for consolidation because the services represented by codes 22554 and 63075 were identified by the RUC Relativity Assessment Workgroup as services that are performed by the same physician on the same date of service 75% of the time or more.

This article provides current coding guidance for correct reporting of the commonly paired arthrodesis (and vertebral corpectomy) procedures, addresses the possibility of consolidating codes 22554 and 63081, and details the potential effects of a revised coding structure.

Arthrodesis

22551 Arthrodesis, anterior interbody, including disc space preparation, discectomy, osteophyctomy and decompression of spinal cord and/or nerve

roots; cervical below C2

 **22552** cervical below C2, each additional interspace (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)

(Use 22552 in conjunction with 22551)

22554 Arthrodesis, anterior interbody technique, including minimal discectomy to prepare interspace (other than for decompression); cervical below C2

(Do not report 22554 in conjunction with 63075, even if performed by a separate individual. To report anterior cervical discectomy and interbody fusion at the same level during the same session, use 22551)

Anterior or Anterolateral Approach for Extradural Exploration/Decompression

63081 Vertebral corpectomy (vertebral body resection), partial or complete, anterior approach with decompression of spinal cord and/or nerve root(s); cervical, single segment

Codes 22551 and 22552 describe anterior interbody arthrodesis procedures associated with decompression of the spinal cord and nerve root(s) at the disc space and include discectomies provided at the same level as the arthrodesis. Code 22554 describes an anterior interbody arthrodesis technique but does not include decompression of the spinal cord and nerve root(s) and is often reported in conjunction with code 63081, which describes removal (partial, at least 50%, or complete) of the cervical vertebral body. Per the CPT 2023 code set, “For vertebral corpectomy, the term partial is used to describe the removal of a substantial portion of the body of the vertebra. In the cervical spine, the amount of bone removed is defined as at least one-half of the vertebral body.”

Table 1. Comparing Code Pairing for Arthrodesis with Vertebral Corpectomy

Arthrodesis with Vertebral Corpectomy	Codes 22551 and 22552	Codes 22554 and 63081
Technique/Approach	Anterior	Anterior
Region	Cervical	Cervical
Decompression	Included at disc space	22554: Not Included 63081: Included at vertebral body and adjacent disc spaces
Reporting decompression below C2	Each additional interspace	Single segment