



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
OTOLARYNGOLOGY-
HEAD AND NECK SURGERY®

Template Appeal Letter: CT Scan for Chronic Sinusitis

July 2025

While the AAO-HNS cannot represent physician members individually on each issue with private payers, the Academy strives to provide resources that assist members on nationwide reimbursement matters. In response to reported denials for CT scans of the paranasal sinuses when a patient has not received antibiotics for chronic sinusitis, the following template letter is provided to AAO-HNS members as a resource to assist in drafting appeals. It is intended for guidance only and should be customized to reflect your specific circumstances. Please ensure that all sections are tailored appropriately before sending, including the addition of your organization's letterhead or logo, completion of blank fields, and removal of any content not relevant to your case.

Supporting documentation, such as medical notes, operative reports, the Academy's [Position Statement](#) on point-of-care imaging in otolaryngology and the Academy's 2025 [Clinical Practice Guideline](#) on adult sinusitis should be included as applicable to strengthen your submission. It is important to note that this document does not guarantee a successful appeal or payment but is simply a tool to facilitate the appeals process.

Questions? Contact the Academy's Health Policy Advocacy Team:

healthpolicy@entnet.org.

[Insert Date]

ATTN: [Insert Medical Director's Name]

[Insert Insurance Company Name]

[Insert Insurance Company Address]

[Insert Insurance Company City/State]

Re: Appeal for Claim Denial: CT Scan for Chronic Sinusitis

Claim #: [Insert Claim Number]

Patient Name: [Insert Patient's Name]

Policy/Subscriber ID: [Insert Patient's Policy/Subscriber ID]

Date(s) of Service: [Insert Date(s) of Service]

Total Billed Amount: [Insert Total Billed Amount]

Dear [Insert Medical Director's Name]:

This letter is a formal request for reconsideration of a denial received for a CT scan of the paranasal sinuses for patient [Insert Patient's Name] on [Insert Date of Service] (Claim #[Insert Claim Number]). This diagnostic imaging was ordered by [Insert Physician's Name] and was deemed medically necessary to assess the extent of sinus disease and determine the appropriate course of treatment. The [Choose Claim or Pre-Certification] for the CT scan was billed with CPT [Insert CPT Code and Descriptor] but was denied based on [Insert Reason for Denial].

Option 1: Choose the following language if the pre-certification or claim was denied because the patient's condition was listed as chronic for more than 3 months, a nasal endoscopy was previously documented, and no antibiotics were prescribed.

We understand that the denial was based on [Insert Payer]'s policy that several weeks of antibiotics be employed before a CT scan of the sinuses should be obtained. I respectfully disagree with this determination.

As you likely already know, the increased use of inappropriately prescribed antibiotics places patients and society at greater risk of both adverse events and antibiotic-resistant infections. A 2025 update to the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery's (AAO-HNS) Clinical Practice Guideline for Sinusitis recommends against the use of systemic antibiotics to treat chronic sinusitis. Although previous AAO-HNS guidelines recommended 4-6 weeks of antibiotics to treat chronic sinusitis, recent research indicates that chronic sinusitis is a primarily inflammatory—not infectious—spectrum of disorders. Therefore, the AAO-HNS now recommends nasal saline irrigation and intranasal corticosteroid spray as first-line treatment for chronic sinusitis. In fact, the AAO-HNS states that “clinicians should not routinely prescribe antimicrobial therapy for adults with CRS without acute exacerbation OR as a mandatory prerequisite for paranasal sinus imaging.”

The diagnosis of chronic sinusitis for [Insert Patient's Name] was made based on both [his/her] history and an endoscopic examination of the nose. Antibiotics were not prescribed to treat [Insert Patient's Name]'s condition, because [Insert Clinical Rationale]. Nasal saline irrigation and topical intranasal steroids, which **are** indicated for routine management of chronic sinusitis, have previously been prescribed for this patient. For these reasons, a CT scan of [Insert Patient's Name] sinuses to further assess the extent of inflammatory disease is appropriate and should be reimbursed at the full allowable amount.

Option 2: Choose the following language if the pre-certification or claim was denied because you did not include a documented nasal endoscopy.

I respectfully disagree with [Insert Payer]'s denial of this CT scan of the sinuses as medically unnecessary for [Insert Patient Name] because I did not include the patient's nasal endoscopic examination. Nasal endoscopic examinations do not need to be

repeated, as the patient has already had a previous nasal endoscopic examination which demonstrated [Insert Clinical Findings (i.e., narrowed nasal passages, narrowed middle meatus, pus/purulence/ polyps noted in the nasal cavities, etc.)].

A 2025 update to the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery's (AAO-HNS) Clinical Practice Guideline for Sinusitis recommends that CT scanning is an appropriate method of diagnostic testing for chronic sinusitis, as it can help quantify the extent of inflammatory disease based on opacification of the paranasal sinuses. Specifically, the AAO-HNS states that "nasal endoscopy does have limitations in diagnosing CRS without polyposis because of the difficulty visualizing inside the sinus cavities, whereas CT can distinguish obstruction of ostiomeatal complex and opacification/mucosal thickening of sinus cavities." CT scans are particularly useful for evaluating patients with a prolonged or complicated clinical course, as is the case with [Insert Patient Name]. For these reasons, a CT scan of [Insert Patient's Name] sinuses is appropriate and should be reimbursed at the full allowable amount.

Include for Both Options:

Furthermore, in the attached AAO-HNS position statement, the Academy emphasizes that point-of-care imaging provides prompt diagnosis and treatment, fewer trips to a medical center or doctor's office, and lower costs for both patients and payers. Otolaryngologists possess extensive professional expertise to perform and interpret diagnostic imaging, including CT scans for chronic sinusitis. As a result, we believe that [Insert Payer]'s denial of this procedure is not justifiable.

Please reprocess this [Choose Claim or Pre-Certification], allowing payment for this CT scan of the sinus passages. If additional benefits cannot be approved, please provide a written explanation with supporting documentation from CMS guidelines and/or any applicable internal policy guidelines. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Insert Physician Name]

[Insert Practice/Institution Name]

Enclosures: [List Number of Enclosed Documents]

cc: [Insert Patient's Name]