

Physician and Advanced Practitioner Newsletter



2021 Office/Outpatient CPT Codes:

Determining the Level of Service:

Starting January 1st, 2021 the appropriate E/M service level code is based on **one** of the following:

1. The level of medical decision-making (MDM), as outlined for each service level on page 2 **OR**
2. The **total** time for E/M services performed on the same date of service

Code Description	CPT Level	MDM (table on page 2)	Time (minutes)
Office or other outpatient visit for the evaluation and management of a NEW patient which requires medically appropriate history and/or examination and [SF/Low/Mod/High] level of medical decision making.	99202	Straightforward	15 -29
	99203	Low	30 – 44
	99204	Moderate	45 – 59
	99205	High	60 – 74
Office or other outpatient visit for the evaluation and management of an ESTABLISHED patient which requires medically appropriate history and/or examination and [SF/Low/Mod/High] level of medical decision making.	99212	Straightforward	10 – 19
	99213	Low	20 – 29
	99214	Moderate	30 – 39
	99215	High	40 – 54

Selecting Level of Service based on Medical Decision Making (MDM):

1. Number and complexity of problems addressed at the encounter.
2. The amount and/or complexity of data to be reviewed and analyzed.
3. The risk of complications and/or morbidity or mortality of patient management.

Selecting Level of Service based on Time:

- Total Time is defined as the time spent both face-to-face and non-face-to-face to provide patient services on **the same date of the encounter**.
 - Non-face-to-face time may include reviewing the patient’s medical record; ordering prescriptions, services, and tests; and discussions with other healthcare providers.
 - Total time excludes services provided on different dates than the encounter; overlapping time spent between APP and Physician for split-shared billing and services performed by clinical staff (Nurses or Medical Assistants).

Documentation changes:

Document the history and/or physical exam as clinically appropriate. History and exam elements are no longer required for level selection for visits 99202-99215.

**Table 2 – CPT E/M Office Revisions
Level of Medical Decision Making (MDM)**

Revisions effective January 1, 2021:

Note: this content will not be included in the CPT 2020 code set release



Code	Level of MDM (Based on 2 out of 3 Elements of MDM)	Elements of Medical Decision Making		
		Number and Complexity of Problems Addressed	Amount and/or Complexity of Data to be Reviewed and Analyzed <i>*Each unique test, order, or document contributes to the combination of 2 or combination of 3 in Category 1 below.</i>	Risk of Complications and/or Morbidity or Mortality of Patient Management
99211	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
99202 99212	Straightforward	Minimal • 1 self-limited or minor problem	Minimal or none	Minimal risk of morbidity from additional diagnostic testing or treatment
99203 99213	Low	Low • 2 or more self-limited or minor problems; or • 1 stable chronic illness; or • 1 acute, uncomplicated illness or injury	Limited <i>(Must meet the requirements of at least 1 of the 2 categories)</i> Category 1: Tests and documents • Any combination of 2 from the following: • Review of prior external note(s) from each unique source*; • review of the result(s) of each unique test*; • ordering of each unique test* or Category 2: Assessment requiring an independent historian(s) <i>(For the categories of independent interpretation of tests and discussion of management or test interpretation, see moderate or high)</i>	Low risk of morbidity from additional diagnostic testing or treatment
99204 99214	Moderate	Moderate • 1 or more chronic illnesses with exacerbation, progression, or side effects of treatment; or • 2 or more stable chronic illnesses; or • 1 undiagnosed new problem with uncertain prognosis; or • 1 acute illness with systemic symptoms; or • 1 acute complicated injury	Moderate <i>(Must meet the requirements of at least 1 out of 3 categories)</i> Category 1: Tests, documents, or independent historian(s) • Any combination of 3 from the following: • Review of prior external note(s) from each unique source*; • Review of the result(s) of each unique test*; • Ordering of each unique test*; • Assessment requiring an independent historian(s) or Category 2: Independent interpretation of tests • Independent interpretation of a test performed by another physician/other qualified health care professional (not separately reported); or Category 3: Discussion of management or test interpretation • Discussion of management or test interpretation with external physician/other qualified health care professional/appropriate source (not separately reported)	Moderate risk of morbidity from additional diagnostic testing or treatment <i>Examples only:</i> • Prescription drug management • Decision regarding minor surgery with identified patient or procedure risk factors • Decision regarding elective major surgery without identified patient or procedure risk factors • Diagnosis or treatment significantly limited by social determinants of health
99205 99215	High	High • 1 or more chronic illnesses with severe exacerbation, progression, or side effects of treatment; or • 1 acute or chronic illness or injury that poses a threat to life or bodily function	Extensive <i>(Must meet the requirements of at least 2 out of 3 categories)</i> Category 1: Tests, documents, or independent historian(s) • Any combination of 3 from the following: • Review of prior external note(s) from each unique source*; • Review of the result(s) of each unique test*; • Ordering of each unique test*; • Assessment requiring an independent historian(s) or Category 2: Independent interpretation of tests • Independent interpretation of a test performed by another physician/other qualified health care professional (not separately reported); or Category 3: Discussion of management or test interpretation • Discussion of management or test interpretation with external physician/other qualified health care professional/appropriate source (not separately reported)	High risk of morbidity from additional diagnostic testing or treatment <i>Examples only:</i> • Drug therapy requiring intensive monitoring for toxicity • Decision regarding elective major surgery with identified patient or procedure risk factors • Decision regarding emergency major surgery • Decision regarding hospitalization • Decision not to resuscitate or to de-escalate care because of poor prognosis

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Direct Link to the grid on AMA website: <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2019-06/cpt-revised-mdm-grid.pdf>

