

E/M Code Quick Reference Sheet

Office • Hospital • Nursing Facility • Telehealth • Updated for 2021+ Guidelines

Under 2021+ AMA guidelines, office/outpatient E/M levels are based on MEDICAL DECISION MAKING (MDM) or TOTAL TIME on the date of encounter — not History, Exam, and MDM combined.

Office & Outpatient E/M Codes (99202–99215)

Code	Patient Type	MDM Level	Typical Time	MDM Requirements	Example Use
99202	New Patient	Straightforward	15–29 min	1 problem, minimal risk, lab/test only if needed	Simple prescription renewal, minor new complaint with obvious cause
99203	New Patient	Low Complexity	30–44 min	2+ self-limited problems OR 1 stable chronic illness, low risk	Hypertension check-in, routine new patient visit for managed diabetes
99204	New Patient	Moderate Complexity	45–59 min	1+ chronic illness with exacerbation, new undiagnosed problem, Rx drug mgmt	New patient with uncontrolled asthma, new anxiety requiring medication
99205	New Patient	High Complexity	60–74 min	Severe exacerbation, drug therapy requiring monitoring, threat to life/limb	New patient presenting with chest pain, complex multi-system new patient
99211	Established	N/A (Nurse)	Minimal	Doesn't require physician presence (nurse visit)	Blood pressure check, vaccine injection, suture removal by nurse
99212	Established	Straightforward	10–19 min	1 self-limited problem, minimal risk	Simple medication refill, minor rash follow-up, well-controlled condition
99213	Established	Low Complexity	20–29 min	1+ stable chronic conditions OR minor new problem	Routine diabetes follow-up, follow-up for UTI, controlled hypertension
99214	Established	Moderate Complexity	30–39 min	1+ chronic condition with exacerbation, new problem with uncertain cause	Worsening COPD, new back pain with imaging ordered, medication adjustment
99215	Established	High Complexity	40–54 min	Severe problem, drug monitoring, possible hospitalization	Severe exacerbation of multiple chronic conditions, complex decision-making

Hospital Inpatient E/M Codes (Initial & Subsequent)

Code	Patient Type	MDM Level	Typical Time	MDM Requirements	Example Use
99221	Initial Hospital	Low	30 min	Low complexity MDM or 30 min time	Simple admission for minor illness
99222	Initial Hospital	Moderate	50 min	Moderate complexity MDM or 50 min time	Admission for pneumonia, moderate workup
99223	Initial Hospital	High	70 min	High complexity MDM or 70 min time	ICU or complex multi-system admission
99231	Subsequent Hosp	Low	25 min	Stable or improving, low complexity	Routine morning round on improving patient
99232	Subsequent Hosp	Moderate	35 min	Responding inadequately, moderate MDM	Patient with persistent fever being monitored
99233	Subsequent Hosp	High	50 min	Unstable or significant new problem	Deteriorating patient requiring new workup
99238	Hospital Discharge	N/A	≤30 min	Discharge day management	Discharge with instructions, prescriptions, follow-up
99239	Hospital Discharge	N/A	>30 min	Discharge with complex planning	Complex discharge needing extensive coordination

Emergency Department E/M Codes (99281–99285)

Code	Patient Type	MDM Level	Typical Time	MDM Requirements	Example Use
99281	ED Visit	Self-Limited	N/A	Minor problem, minimal workup needed	Simple splinter removal, minor insect sting
99282	ED Visit	Low	N/A	Low complexity, minimal risk	Mild sprain, minor laceration
99283	ED Visit	Moderate	N/A	Moderate severity, some workup	UTI with fever, moderate abdominal pain
99284	ED Visit	High	N/A	High severity, complex workup	Chest pain requiring EKG & labs, fracture
99285	ED Visit	High + Threat	N/A	High severity, potential threat to life or limb	Stroke, MI, major trauma, sepsis workup

Nursing Facility E/M Codes (99304–99318)

Code	Patient Type	MDM Level	Typical Time	MDM Requirements	Example Use
99304	NF Initial	Low	25 min	Low complexity new NF admit	New SNF admission for physical therapy after hip replacement

Code	Patient Type	MDM Level	Typical Time	MDM Requirements	Example Use
99305	NF Initial	Moderate	35 min	Moderate complexity new NF admit	New admission for wound care and medication management
99306	NF Initial	High	45 min	High complexity new NF admit	New admission for complex medical conditions, multiple Rx changes
99307	NF Subsequent	Straight.	10 min	Straightforward, stable	Routine monthly check, no changes in condition
99308	NF Subsequent	Low	15 min	Low complexity, minor new problem	New rash or minor complaint in stable patient
99309	NF Subsequent	Moderate	25 min	Moderate complexity or deterioration	Increased confusion, possible UTI, lab review
99310	NF Subsequent	High	35 min	High complexity, possible transfer	Sudden acute change requiring urgent evaluation
99315	NF Discharge	N/A	≤30 min	Discharge from nursing facility	Patient going home, discharge documentation done
99316	NF Discharge	N/A	>30 min	Complex NF discharge planning	Extended discharge to home with complex needs, family counseling

Medical Decision Making (MDM) — Quick Reference

MDM Level	Problems Addressed	Data Reviewed & Ordered	Risk of Complications
Straightforward	1 self-limited or minor problem	Minimal or none	Minimal (OTC drugs, minor procedures)
Low Complexity	2+ self-limited problems OR 1 stable chronic illness	Limited (review prior notes, order labs)	Low (OTC or Rx drug with low risk, minor procedures with no risk factors)
Moderate Complexity	1+ chronic illness with exacerbation OR new problem, uncertain prognosis	Moderate (review records, order tests, independent interpretation of test)	Moderate (Rx drug requiring monitoring, minor surgery with risk factors)
High Complexity	1+ chronic illness with severe exacerbation OR threat to life or bodily function	Extensive (multiple sources, extensive review, discussion with specialist)	High (hospitalization, major surgery, drug therapy requiring monitoring, DNR discussion)

Time-Based Billing — Total Time on Date of Encounter

Time includes: face-to-face time with patient AND non-face-to-face time on the same day (reviewing records, placing orders, writing notes, coordinating care). Document total time in minutes in the medical record.

For internal billing team use only • Always verify payer-specific rules • Codes subject to annual updates