

E/M CODING GUIDE 2026

Office Visit Coding (99202–99215) via MDM vs. Time Rules

EVALUATION AND MANAGEMENT (E/M) GUIDELINES

Office and outpatient E/M codes for new patients (99202–99205) and established patients (99211–99215) are chosen using one of two methods: ****Medical Decision Making (MDM)**** or the ****Total Time** spent on the date of the encounter******.

THE THREE ELEMENTS OF MEDICAL DECISION MAKING

To qualify for a specific level of MDM, the documentation must meet or exceed the requirements for at least **two out of three** of these elements:

- 1. Number & Complexity of Problems Addressed:** Ranges from minimal (a minor self-limiting cold) to high (an acute illness that threatens life or bodily function).
- 2. Amount/Complexity of Data to be Reviewed:** Calculated by adding up unique tests ordered/reviewed, collecting histories from independent family members, or reviewing external medical charts.
- 3. Risk of Complications or Treatment Side Effects:** Driven by your management decisions (such as low risk for basic rest, moderate risk for prescription drug management, or high risk for emergency major surgery decisions).

2026 TIME-BASED THRESHOLD REFERENCE

CPT CODE	PATIENT TYPE	MDM REQUIRED LEVEL	EXACT TIME RANGE (MINUTES)
99202	New Patient	Straightforward	15–29 Minutes
99203	New Patient	Low	30–44 Minutes
99204	New Patient	Moderate	45–59 Minutes
99205	New Patient	High	60+ Minutes
99212	Established Patient	Straightforward	10–19 Minutes
99213	Established Patient	Low	20–29 Minutes
99214	Established Patient	Moderate	30–39 Minutes
99215	Established Patient	High	40+ Minutes