

E/M Changes Only to Office/Outpatient-Effective 2021 for 99202-99215 | Overview

January 28, 2020

- ⇒ Medicare adopts CPT E/M changes for 2021, rescinding the plan for bundled payment for three levels of codes
- ⇒ Clinicians can select new and established patient visit based on time or medical decision making (MDM)
- ⇒ New guidelines for using time for 99202—99215, new definitions in MDM
- ⇒ Revised MDM guidelines

The changes below relate only to new and established patient visits in 2021, codes 99202—99215:

- ⇒ Code 99201 will be deleted effective January 01, 2021.
- ⇒ Clinicians may use either time or medical decision making to select a code.
- ⇒ There will be no required level of history or exam for visits 99202—99215. From the AMA website for 2021,

“Office or other outpatient services include a medically appropriate history and/or physical examination, when performed. The nature and extent of the history and/or physical examination is determined by the treating physician or other qualified health care professional reporting the service. The care team may collect information and the patient or caregiver may supply information directly (eg, by portal or questionnaire) that is reviewed by the reporting physician or other qualified health care professional. The extent of history and physical examination is not an element in selection of office or other outpatient services.”

- ⇒ Time will be defined as total time spent, including non-face-to-face work done on that day, and will no longer require time to be dominated by counseling.
- ⇒ Visits will have a range for time, e.g., 99213 will be 20-29 minutes, 99214 will be 30-39 minutes
- ⇒ There will be new definitions within MDM.
- ⇒ The MDM calculation will be similar to, but not identical to, the current MDM calculation.

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⇒ CPT is providing numerous definitions to clarify terms in the current guidelines, such as “chronic illness with exacerbation, progression or side effects of treatment,” and “drug therapy requiring intensive monitoring for toxicity.”

Typical times vs. planned times for 2021

E/M code	Typical time	2021 time
99201	10	N/A, code deleted
99202	20	15-29
99203	30	30-44
99204	45	45-59
99205	60	60-74
99211	5	N/A, no time listed
99212	10	10-19
99213	15	20-29
99214	25	30-39
99215	40	40-54

All other E/M services that are defined by the three key components will continue to use the 1995 and/or 1997 Documentation Guidelines, not just in 2020, but in 2021.

Please note for all other places of service the respective E&M code remain the same and are defined by the 3 key components