

TIME-BASED CODING GUIDELINES

CPT lists average time guidelines for a variety of services, as shown below. While time spent does not determine the level of coding in most cases, the averages can assist physicians in recognizing prolonged services and coding appropriately. For visits that involve more than 50 percent counseling or coordination of care, time can determine the level of coding. For example, if a 30-minute office visit with an established patient involved more than 15 minutes of counseling and coordination of care, you could code the visit as a 99214 on this basis rather than on the basis of the history, exam, and medical decision-making elements.

OFFICE VISITS		
Avg. minutes spent (face-to-face)	New patient code	Established patient code
5		99211
10	99201	99212
15		99213
20	99202	
25		99214
30	99203	
40		99215
45	99204	
60	99205	

OUTPATIENT CONSULTATIONS, NEW OR ESTABLISHED	
Avg. minutes spent (face-to-face)	Consultation code
15	99241
30	99242
40	99243
60	99244
80	99245

INPATIENT CARE		
Avg. minutes spent (floor/unit)	Initial care code	Subsequent care code
15		99231
25		99232
30	99221	
35		99233
50	99222	
70	99223	

INPATIENT CONSULTATIONS, NEW OR ESTABLISHED	
Avg. minutes spent (floor/unit)	Initial consultation code
10	
20	99251
30	
40	99252
55	99253
80	99254

When physicians provide services that require more time than what is typical, they can submit prolonged service codes in addition to the appropriate E/M code. When calculating minutes spent in prolonged service, count only minutes spent beyond the typical service.

OUTPATIENT CARE PROLONGED SERVICES	
Minutes of prolonged service (face-to-face)	Code
30-74	99354
75-104	99354 plus 99355
105-134	99354 plus 99355 x 2

INPATIENT CARE PROLONGED SERVICES	
Minutes of prolonged service (floor/unit)	Code
60	99356
61-90	99356 plus 99357
91-120	99356 plus 99357 x 2

PROLONGED SERVICES WITHOUT DIRECT PATIENT CONTACT	
Minutes of prolonged service before and/or after direct patient care	Code
60	99358
61-90	99358 plus 99359
91 -120	99358 plus 99359 X 2



FPM Toolbox To find more practice resources, visit <https://www.aafp.org/fpm/toolbox>.

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