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Medical Decision-Making Modifications

One element in the level of code selection for an office or other outpatient service is the number and complexity of the problems that are addressed at an encounter. Multiple new or established conditions may be addressed at the same time and may affect medical decision-making. Symptoms may cluster around a specific diagnosis and each symptom is not necessarily a unique condition. Comorbidities/underlying diseases, in and of themselves, are not considered in selecting a level of E/M services unless they are addressed, and their presence increases the amount and/or complexity of data to be reviewed and analyzed or the risk of complications and/or morbidity or mortality of patient management.

MDM 2021 Codes and Levels

CODE	LEVEL OF MDM	NUMBER AND COMPLEXITY OF PROBLEMS	AMOUNT OF DATA	RISK OF COMPLICATIONS
99211	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
99202 99212	STRAIGHT-FORWARD	MINIMAL	MINIMAL OR NONE	MINIMAL
99203 99213	LOW	LOW	LIMITED: Categories 1 & 2	LOW
99204 99214	MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE Categories 1 & 2	MODERATE
99205 99215	HIGH	HIGH	EXTENSIVE Categories 1-3	HIGH
<i>Source: AMA Table-CPT E/M Office Revisions, Level of MDM, effective 010121</i>				

The final diagnosis for a condition does not in itself determine the complexity or risk, as extensive evaluation may be required to reach the conclusion that the signs or symptoms do not represent a highly morbid condition. Multiple problems of a lower severity may, in the aggregate, create higher risk due to interaction.

There are twenty-two definitions relating to the elements of MDM or office/outpatient services:

Code	Level of MDM (Based on 2 out of 3 Elements of MDM)	Number and Complexity of Problems Addressed	Elements of Medical Decision Making	
			Amount and/or Complexity of Data to be Reviewed and Analyzed	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 (Must meet the requirements of at least 1 of the 2 categories) 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) (For the categories of independent interpretation of tests and discussion of management or test interpretation, see moderate or high)	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 (Must meet the requirements of at least 1 out of 3 categories) 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 (Must meet the requirements of at least 2 out of 3 categories) 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

Problem: A problem is a disease, condition, illness, injury, symptom, sign, finding, complaint or other matter addressed at the encounter with or without a diagnosis being established at the time of the encounter.

- Problem addressed
- Minimal Problem
- Self-limited or minor problem
- Undiagnosed new problem with uncertain prognosis

External Physician or Other Qualified Healthcare Professional: An individual not in the same group practice or who is of a different specialty or subspecialty.

- Includes licensed professional practicing independently
- May also be facility or organizational provider (i.e., hospital, nursing facility, home health care agency)

Independent Historian(s): An individual (e.g., parent, guardian, surrogate, spouse, witness) who provides history in addition to history provided by patient who is unable to provide complete or reliable history (e.g., due to developmental stage, dementia or psychosis), or because confirmatory history is judged to be necessary. In case where there may be conflict or poor communication between multiple historians and more than one historian(s) is needed, independent historian(s) requirement is met.

Social Determinants of Health

- Economic and social conditions that influence the health of people and communities
- Examples: Food or housing insecurity

Additional Terms defined for Documentation

- Appropriate source
- Morbidity
 - Risk
 - Test
 - Acute, complicate injury
 - External
 - Drug therapy
 - Stable chronic illness
 - Acute, uncomplicated illness or injury
 - Chronic illness with exacerbation, progression of side effects of treatment

Additional Items (continued)

- Acute illness with systemic symptoms
- Chronic illness with **severe** exacerbation, progression or side effects of treatment
- Acute or chronic illness or injury that poses a threat to life or bodily function
- Independent interpretation