

Dermatology Coding Alert

CLIP & SAVE: Here's the Quick Way to Find Out if the Patient Is Really New

Answer the new-vs.-established question correctly every time with this tool

Take the AMA's advice and answer these five questions to determine definitively if you should treat a patient as "new" or "established" for coding purposes.

1. Has the patient ever received any professional services from any physician in this group?

No: The patient is New. **Yes:** Go on to question 2. 2. Has the patient received any professional service from a particular physician within the past three years, who is now reporting service?

Yes: The patient is Established. **No:** Go on to question 3. 3. Has the patient received any professional service* from a physician in the group of the same specialty, within the past three years? (* CPT defines a professional service as "those face-to-face services rendered by a physician and reported by a specific CPT code.")

No: The patient is New. **Yes:** Go on to question 4. 4. Has the patient received care from a physician of the exact same specialty within the past three years, or is a physician of a different subspecialty now providing care?

The providing physician is of the same specialty: The patient is Established.

The providing physician is of a different subspecialty: Go to question 5. 5. Does the current providing physician have the same tax ID as the physician who provided a separate service with in the past 36 months?

Yes: The patient is Established. **No:** The patient is New.

Editor's note: You can also find a similar flowchart on page 2 of the "Evaluation and Management (E/M) Services Guidelines" portion of CPT 2007: Professional Edition, published by the AMA.