

Internal Medicine Coding Alert

Reader Question: Dont Separately Code Peak Flow

Question: I never know when to charge for peak flow separately or when it's included in the visit. What should I code and when?

California Subscriber

Answer: From a CPT perspective, when performed, peak-flow rate is an inherent part of the E/M examination and is not separately reported. Some coders report 94150 (Vital capacity, total [separate procedure]) for peak flow, but 94150 does not describe peak-flow measurement and should not be used to report for peak flow.

Commonly used with a diagnosis of asthma, the peak-flow monitor allows physicians to better understand an asthma patient's condition (mild, acute, etc). Often, doctors refer to this when a patient comes in with asthma and an upper-respiratory infection. They will ask the patient what his peak-flow best is and take another reading with the patient in the office to judge the condition's severity with the upper-respiratory complication/infection.