

## Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

### Position Preventive Medicine Counseling Codes Correctly

#### Learn why a patient's illness negates using these codes

If the patient sees the physician just for counseling and does not have an established illness, you should use one of four codes, says **Karen Green, CPC-H, OGS**, coding specialist for **Eau Claire Women's Care** in Wisconsin. Depending on the session's duration, assign:

- 99401--Preventive medicine counseling and/or risk factor reduction intervention(s) provided to an individual (separate procedure); approximately 15 minutes
- 99402--... approximately 30 minutes
- 99403--... approximately 45 minutes
- 99404--... approximately 60 minutes.

According to CPT, counseling codes apply when a physician counsels on family problems, diet and exercise, substance abuse, sexual practices, injury prevention, dental health, and diagnostic and laboratory test results available at the time of the encounter.

**Caution:** In other words, the purpose of the visit must be promoting health and/or preventing illness or injury. If the patient is ill, you shouldn't use the preventive counseling codes. For example, use a counseling code when the doctor provides counseling on diet and exercise for a well patient who wants to lose weight, but not when the doctor provides the same services to a diabetic patient.