



Billing and Reimbursement Policy: New Versus Established Patient Guidelines

Key coding and reimbursement points include:

- “New” is defined as a “new physician or another physician of the same specialty who belongs to the same group practice.
- A new patient is one that has not been treated within the last three calendar years.
- If no face-to-face encounter has previously occurred between the physician and the patient, then the patient may be coded as a new patient the first time a face-to-face encounter does occur.
- In the instance where a physician is on call or covering for another physician, the patient’s encounter will be reimbursed as if treated by member’s physician who was not available.
- An interpretation of a diagnostic test, reading of an x-ray or EKG, etc., in the absence of a face-to-face encounter does not affect the new patient designation.
- This policy applies to all places of service that utilize Evaluation and Management codes.

Publication date:
09/01/10