

CPT CODES WITH TIME ELEMENTS

Issue Date: June 30, 1993

Authority: [32 CFR 199.14\(h\)](#)

I. ISSUE

What does the term "time" refer to in the procedure codes? Can time alone be used to select a code?

II. POLICY

A. Face-to-face time for outpatient care. Time in the office, in therapy, or other outpatient services and office consultation categories means the time that the provider typically spends on a face-to-face basis with the patient and/or family.

B. Face-to-face time for inpatient care. Time for inpatient hospital care, therapy, initial and follow-up hospital consultations, and nursing facilities refers to the time the physician spends on a face-to-face basis at the patient's bedside.

C. Use of time in selecting a code. When counseling and/or coordination of care dominates (more than 50%) the face-to-face provider/patient encounter, time is the key or controlling factor. The code selection is based on the total time of the face-to-face encounter. The medical record must be documented in sufficient detail to justify the selection of the specific code.

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