

Example E/M Documentation – Time-Based Coding with Separately Reported Procedure

This example demonstrates compliant documentation for a physician using total time to select an E/M level while subtracting procedure time for a separately billable service (cryotherapy).

Visit Information

Visit Type: Established patient office visit

Primary Diagnoses:

1. Essential hypertension
2. Hypothyroidism, primary
3. Actinic keratosis — treated with cryotherapy

Subjective

Patient presents for routine follow-up of hypothyroidism and hypertension. Reports good adherence to levothyroxine and lisinopril. Denies chest pain, dizziness, or palpitations. Notes new rough, scaly lesion on right forearm present for several months, occasionally irritated.

Objective

Vitals: BP 132/78, HR 72, Wt 162 lbs

General: Well-developed, no acute distress

Skin: Single erythematous scaly macule, 4 mm, right forearm

Cardiac: Regular rate/rhythm, no murmurs

Thyroid: No palpable nodules, no enlargement

Labs reviewed: TSH, free T4, CMP — all stable from prior month

Assessment

1. Essential hypertension — controlled on lisinopril
2. Primary hypothyroidism — stable on current levothyroxine dose
3. Actinic keratosis, right forearm — appropriate for cryotherapy

Plan

- Continue levothyroxine 100 mcg daily
- Continue lisinopril 10 mg daily
- Repeat labs in 6 months
- Provided education on medication adherence, low-sodium diet, and sun protection
- Cryotherapy: Liquid nitrogen applied ×2 freeze–thaw cycles to single lesion; patient tolerated well
- Advised on wound care and to return if lesion recurs

Time-Based Documentation Statement

Total QHP time on date of service: 35 minutes

- 30 minutes spent on chronic disease management (reviewing labs, medication reconciliation, counseling on thyroid and blood pressure control, documentation, and patient education).
- 5 minutes spent performing and documenting cryotherapy (CPT® 17000), which is separately reportable and not included in the E/M time.

Total time counted toward E/M selection: 30 minutes (CPT® 99214 — Established patient, 30–39 minutes).

Coding Summary

Service	Code	Time Basis / Description
E/M – Established patient visit	99214-25	Time-based, 30 minutes of QHP time (excluding procedure)
Cryotherapy – 1st lesion	17000	Destruction of premalignant lesion (actinic keratosis)

Teaching Points

- The procedure time (cryotherapy) must be excluded from total E/M time since it is separately reportable.
- Always document total time and time spent on the separately billed procedure.
- The remaining 30 minutes count toward E/M code selection (99214 for established patient).
- Append modifier 25 to the E/M code when billing both the visit and the procedure on the same date.

Final Procedure Coding Example for Claim

99214-25 (Established patient visit, 30 minutes, time-based)

17000 (Destruction of premalignant lesion, 1 lesion — cryotherapy)