NEW PATIENT VS. ESTABLISHED PATIENT SELECTION ASSISTANCE

Definitions

• **New Patient** - A new patient is defined as one who has not received any professional services from a physician or physician group practice (same physician specialty) within the previous 3 years, e.g., evaluation and management (E/M) services, surgical procedures or other face-to-face services.
  - An interpretation of a diagnostic test, reading an x-ray or EKG, etc., in the absence of an E/M service or other face-to-face service with a patient does not affect the designation as a new patient.
  - Physicians in the same group practice of the same specialty are to bill and be paid as though they were a single physician.
  - Physicians who are of a different specialty may bill and be paid without regard to their membership in a group.

• **Established Patient** - An established patient is one who has received professional services from a physician or a physician in the same group practice of the same specialty within the previous 3 years.
  - If a physician is on call or covering for another physician, a patient’s encounter will be handled the same as if the unavailable physician were there.

Additional Information

• No distinction is made between new and established patients in the emergency department.
• Physicians who share the same tax ID are part of the same group even if they are in different locations.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Scenario</th>
<th>Established Patient</th>
<th>New Patient</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A physician leaves a practice to join a new one. A patient follows the physician to the new practice.</td>
<td>Patient sees original physician at new practice. The patient is considered an established patient for all physicians of the same specialty at the practice.</td>
<td>Patient sees another physician in the new practice before seeing their original physician. For this physician, they are a new patient.</td>
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<td>The professional component of a previous procedure is billed within a 3-year time period, e.g., a lab interpretation is billed and no E/M service or other face-to-face service is billed.</td>
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<td>This patient remains a new patient for the initial E/M visit.</td>
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| A physician and nurse practitioner (NP) are in the same office. The physician sees a patient; the NP later sees the same patient. | | NP can perform and bill for a new patient visit as long as:
  - the NP performed and documented the service
  - the service meets the criteria for a new patient visit
  - the NP bills under his/her own NPI |
| A family physician sees a new patient and refers to a surgeon in the same group with the same tax ID. | | If the surgeon has not seen the patient in the past 3 years, he/she is considered a new patient since the two physicians are of different specialties. |
| A patient presents with a new problem within 3 years for a visit. | This is an established patient; a previous or new problem has no bearing on this. If it has been under 3 years since professional services were rendered, it is an established patient. | If it has been 3 years or more, it is a new patient. |