

Dermatology

CPT® Codes and Tips for 2023

Your dermatology practice performs medical and surgical services for your clients; as such, your medical billing strategy needs an understanding of both medical and surgical dermatology CPT codes.



For the new year, we've compiled this handy list of essential dermatology CPT® codes and relevant medical billing tips to help you and your practice succeed! Be sure to bookmark this page for easy reference and keep reading to learn more!

Why You Need Accurate Dermatology CPT® Codes

The foundation for an optimized healthcare revenue cycle is set in utilizing accurate and appropriate dermatology CPT® codes. When you have the correct codes that are

appropriate for the services rendered and the SOAP notes or other medical documentation to back it up, your claims are more likely to be accepted upon the first submission.

Whether it's due to accidentally typing in the wrong number, not noting the CPT® code that best suits services rendered, or some other reason, reworking rejected claims takes time and money.

Ideally, your practice should have a 95% clean claims rate – meaning that 95% of your claims are successfully

processed on the first submission. In reality, most practices have a clean claims rate between 75% and 85%, which means that 15-25% of claims have to be reworked.

If each claim costs \$25 to rework and you have an average 100 claims that need to be reworked each month, that adds up to a hefty \$2,500 a month and \$30,000 per year! One essential step you can take to avoid these costs is to ensure that each claim uses the correct dermatology CPT® codes.

Essential Dermatology CPT® Codes

These dermatology CPT® codes are essential for your practice:

Skin Biopsy Dermatology CPT® Codes

When a skin biopsy is performed by a dermatologist, skin samples are removed from the surface of the skin to be further examined.

Skin biopsy codes include:

- 11102 - Tangential biopsy of skin; single lesion
- 11103 - Tangential biopsy of skin; each separate or additional lesion
- 11104 - Punch biopsy of skin; single lesion
- 11105 - Punch biopsy of skin; each separate/additional lesion
- 11106 - Incisional biopsy of skin; single lesion
- 11107 - Incisional biopsy of skin; each separate/additional lesion
- 40490 - Biopsy of lip
- 69100 - Biopsy of external ear

Lesion Removal Dermatology CPT® Codes

Lesions can be benign, premalignant, or malignant, and may be removed by any method, including electrocautery, cryosurgery, laser, or chemical treatment.

If multiple lesions are removed, multiple dermatology CPT® codes may be used:

- 17000 - Destruction of premalignant lesions (e.g., actinic

keratoses); first lesion

- 17003 - Destruction of premalignant lesions (e.g., actinic keratoses); 2-14 lesions
- 17110 - Destruction of benign lesions other than skin tags or cutaneous vascular proliferative lesions; up to 14 lesions

Excisions of Lesions Dermatology CPT® Codes

Excising a lesion involves the surgical removal of lesions and the surrounding tissue.

Codes include:

- 11403 - Excision, benign lesion including margins; trunk, arms, or legs
- 11603 - Excision, malignant lesion including margins; trunk, arms, or legs

Mohs Micrographic Surgery Dermatology CPT® Codes

Mohs micrographic surgery involves the removal of skin cancer; this surgery is typically conducted in several stages, including the removal of tumor tissue and pathologic examination.

Codes are separated using location and stage:

- 17311 - Mohs micrographic technique on head, neck, hands, feet; first stage
- 17312 - Mohs micrographic technique on head, neck, hands, feet; each additional stage
- 17313 - Mohs micrographic technique on trunk, arms, and legs; first stage
- 17314 - Mohs micrographic technique on trunk, arms, and legs; each additional stage

Pathology CPT® Codes for Dermatologists

Pathology procedures study skin and tissue at the microscopic cellular level.

Assign codes accordingly:

- 88304 - Level III - surgical pathology, gross and microscopic exam

- 88305 - Level IV - surgical pathology, gross and microscopic exam
- 88312 - Special stain including interpretation and report
- 88341 - Immunohistochemistry or immunocytochemistry

Laser Therapy and Phototherapy Treatments CPT® Codes

Laser therapy utilizes different laser wavelengths to treat a variety of skin conditions and can be used for cosmetic purposes. On the other hand, phototherapy treatments use UV light to treat skin conditions such as eczema and psoriasis.

These dermatology CPT® codes are as follows:

- 96920 and 96921 - Laser treatment for inflammatory skin disease
- 96900 - Actinotherapy (UV light)
- 96910 - Photochemotherapy; tar and ultraviolet B or petrolatum and ultraviolet B
- 96567 - Photodynamic therapy by external application of light to destroy premalignant and/or malignant lesions
- J7308 - Aminolevulinic acid HCL for topical administration

Evaluation/Management (E/M) CPT® Codes and Billing Tips for Dermatologists

When submitting a claim with E/M codes, it's important to clarify if the patient was new or returning to your practice:

- **New patient:** An individual who hasn't received any services from a physician/non-physician practitioner (NPP) or any other physician of the same specialty who belongs to the same practice within the last 3 years.
- **Returning patient:** An individual who has received services from a physician/NPP or anyone else of the same specialty and who belongs to your practice within the last 3 years.

Furthermore, it's important to know that you can bill based on time allotted or based on the complexity of your patient.

For time-based E/M medical billing, use these codes:

- 99202 - 15-29 minutes

- 99203 - 30-44 minutes
- 99204 - 45-59 minutes
- 99205 - 60-74 minutes

If billing based on complexity, use these CPT® codes:

- 99212 - Straightforward level of complexity, minimal risk or chance of complications (approximately 10-19 minutes)
- 99213 - Low level of complexity, low risk or chance of complications (approx. 20-29 minutes)
- 99214 - Moderate complexity, moderate risk, or chance of complications (30-39 minutes)
- 99215 - High complexity, high risk, or chance of complications (40-54 minutes)

Dermatology CPT® Codes with Modifiers

Some medical billing codes for dermatologists can include modifiers; these are as follows:

- Modifier 25 - This should only be used along with E/M CPT® codes for patients who are established with the practice; don't use it for claims with new patients or in conjunction with other dermatology CPT® codes.
- Modifier 59 - The 59 modifier is attached to other dermatology CPT® codes to indicate a service or procedure was distinct or separate from others performed on the same day.

Antonio Arias, MBA, CHBME, with NCG Medical.

Balancing your dermatology practice's appointments, SOAP notes, billing, and coding, all the while delivering top-quality care to your patients can be overwhelming. Save time, energy, and streamline your healthcare revenue cycle by bundling your practice management with outsourced dermatology insurance and Medicare billing from NCG Medical!

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2023 E/M CHANGES

In 2021, the office/other outpatient codes and guidelines went through revisions. For 2023, the rest of the E/M sections underwent a major overhaul. We cover all sections revised with comprehension checks to ensure attendees will be able to:

- Apply the 2023 E/M definitions and guidelines in CPT to the medical record.
- Utilize the revised 2023 Medical Decision Making (MDM) Table in CPT to review E/M services.
- Demonstrate to physicians and other providers proper documentation that supports the level of services reported.

AUDITING SOLUTIONS

CHCS provides many types of audits for CPT and/or diagnosis.

CONSULTING SOLUTIONS

- Physician/provider education on multiple specialties.
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EDUCATION SOLUTIONS

Education can be customized for your practice, department, or group. Services can be performed on-site, or virtually through our eLearning platform.



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Betty A. Hovey is a seasoned healthcare professional with over three decades of experience in the field. She has extensive experience conducting audits for medical practices and payors. She specializes in educating various groups including coding professionals, auditors, doctors, APPs, payors, and others on coding, billing and related topics. Betty is a highly sought-after speaker and has co-authored manuals on ICD-10-CM, ICD-10-PCS, E/M, and various CPT specialty areas.



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