



Definitions

Critical Care

CPT currently defines a critical illness or injury as an illness or injury that acutely impairs one or more vital organ systems such that there is a high probability of imminent or life-threatening deterioration in the patient's condition.

Critical care services are defined as a physician's direct delivery of medical care for a critically ill or critically injured patient. It involves decision-making of high complexity to assess, manipulate, and support vital organ system failure and/or to prevent further life-threatening deterioration of the patient's condition. Examples of vital organ system failure include, but are not limited to:

- central nervous system failure
- circulatory failure
- shock
- renal
- hepatic
- metabolic
- respiratory failure

Coding Tip:

Provider time for critical care services encompasses time spent engaged in work directly related to the individual patient's care, whether that time was spent at the immediate bedside or elsewhere. Time spent is always documented.

For example, time spent can be at the bedside, reviewing test results, discussing the case with staff, documenting the medical record, and time spent with family members (or surrogate decision makers) discussing specific treatment issues when the patient is unable or clinically incompetent to participate in providing a history or making management decisions.