Exams Before Cataract Surgery

Updated April 24, 2020

The operating facility has reopened, and you are now ready to perform the cataract cases that were scheduled prior to the public health emergency. There are payer requirements to consider:

- Is another exam required within 90-days of surgery?
- If yes, at what level of exam?
- Is dilation required?

It is up to the surgeon to decide if an exam is necessary, what elements must be performed and if dilation is required. This may vary based on the date surgery was postponed.

If the surgeon determines an exam is necessary, it can be performed in person or via telemedicine.

It is appropriate for staff can obtain the patient’s history by phone for surgeon review but not separately billable.

Novitas is the only payer (both federal and commercial) requiring an exam 90-days before cataract surgery. It impacts the following states:

- JL- Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware and the District of Columbia
- JH- Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado, New Mexico, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi

Novitas’ policy reads: “The maximum appropriate interval between the preoperative examination and the date of surgery is three months in case there are significant changes in the patient’s health or vision.”

Additional Questions

- What about a history and physical (H&P)? See history and physical at aao.org/coding
- Should the IOL measurement be repeated? No. The original measurements should still be valid.
- Informed Consent. According to Linda D. Harrison, PhD, director of risk management at OMIC, a new consent is not needed when only a few months have elapsed since informed consent was originally obtained, unless anything in the patient’s health has changed that impacts the plan for surgery or the risk level for that patient.
  If neither is true, but the physician observes that the patient appears to be unclear about any of the information in the consent, it would be prudent to review the consent and execute a new one.

All other questions may be submitted to coding@aao.org.