Medical Policy
Retinal Telescreening for Diabetic Retinopathy

Table of Contents
- Policy: Commercial
- Policy: Medicare
- Authorization Information
- Coding Information
- Description
- Policy History
- Information Pertaining to All Policies
- References

Policy Number: 065
BCBSA Reference Number: 9.03.13
NCD/LCD: Local Coverage Determination (LCD): Ophthalmology: Posterior Segment Imaging (Extended Ophthalmoscopy and Fundus Photography) (L33567)

Related Policies
Intravitreal Angiogenesis Inhibitors for Retinal Vascular Conditions, #401

Policy
Commercial Members: Managed Care (HMO and POS), PPO, and Indemnity

Screening for retinopathy in diabetics performed by ophthalmologists or optometrists using conventional fundus photography OR digital retinal imaging technology may be considered MEDICALLY NECESSARY when all of the following criteria are met:
- The individual does not have prior known diabetic retinopathy; and
- The imaging technique covers a total retinal area which includes the Diabetic Retinopathy Study seven-standard fields (DRS7); and
- Use does not exceed one study, utilizing either method, per member, per provider, per year.

Screening for retinopathy in diabetics ordered by non-eye care professionals using digital retinal imaging technology may be considered MEDICALLY NECESSARY when all of the following criteria are met:
- The individual does not have prior known diabetic retinopathy; and
- The imaging technique covers a total retinal area which includes the Diabetic Retinopathy Study seven-standard fields (DRS7); and
- Use does not exceed one study per member per provider per year.

Note: Digital retinal imaging can be performed through either a dilated or undilated pupil.

Retinal telescreening is INVESTIGATIONAL for all other indications, including the monitoring and management of disease in individuals diagnosed with diabetic retinopathy.
Medicare HMO BlueSM and Medicare PPO BlueSM Members

Medical necessity criteria and coding guidance for Medicare Advantage members living in Massachusetts can be found through the link below.

Local Coverage Determination (LCD): Ophthalmology: Posterior Segment Imaging (Extended Ophthalmoscopy and Fundus Photography) (L33567)

For medical necessity criteria and coding guidance for Medicare Advantage members living outside of Massachusetts, please see the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services website for information regarding your specific jurisdiction at https://www.cms.gov.

Prior Authorization Information
Pre-service approval is required for all inpatient services for all products. See below for situations where prior authorization may be required or may not be required for outpatient services.
Yes indicates that prior authorization is required.
No indicates that prior authorization is not required.
N/A indicates that this service is primarily performed in an inpatient setting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outpatient</th>
<th>Commercial Managed Care (HMO and POS)</th>
<th>Commercial PPO and Indemnity</th>
<th>Medicare HMO BlueSM</th>
<th>Medicare PPO BlueSM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
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CPT Codes / HCPCS Codes / ICD Codes

Inclusion or exclusion of a code does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement. Please refer to the member’s contract benefits in effect at the time of service to determine coverage or non-coverage as it applies to an individual member.

Providers should report all services using the most up-to-date industry-standard procedure, revenue, and diagnosis codes, including modifiers where applicable.

The above medical necessity criteria MUST be met for the following codes to be covered for Commercial Members: Managed Care (HMO and POS), PPO, and Indemnity:

CPT Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CPT codes:</th>
<th>Code Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>92227</td>
<td>Remote imaging for detection of retinal disease (e.g., retinopathy in a patient with diabetes) with analysis and report under physician supervision, unilateral or bilateral</td>
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<tr>
<td>92228</td>
<td>Remote imaging for monitoring and management of active retinal disease (e.g., diabetic retinopathy) with physician review, interpretation and report, unilateral or bilateral</td>
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<tr>
<td>92250</td>
<td>Fundus photography with interpretation and report</td>
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Description
DIABETIC RETINOPATHY
Diabetic retinopathy is the leading cause of blindness among adults aged 20 to 74 years in the United States. The major risk factors for developing diabetic retinopathy are the duration of diabetes and severity of hyperglycemia. After 20 years of disease, almost all patients with type 1 and more than 60% of patients with type 2 diabetes will have some degree of retinopathy. Other factors that contribute to the risk of retinopathy include hypertension and elevated serum lipid levels.
Diabetic retinopathy progresses, at varying rates, from asymptomatic, mild nonproliferative abnormalities to proliferative diabetic retinopathy (PDR), with new blood vessel growth on the retina and posterior surface of the vitreous. The 2 most serious complications for vision are diabetic macular edema and PDR. At its earliest stage (nonproliferative retinopathy), the retina develops microaneurysms, intraretinal hemorrhages, and focal areas of retinal ischemia. With the disruption of the blood-retinal barrier, macular retinal vessels become permeable, leading to exudation of serous fluid and lipids into the macula (macular edema). As the disease progresses, retinal blood vessels are blocked, triggering the growth of new and fragile blood vessels (proliferative retinopathy). The new blood vessels that occur in PDR may fibrose and contract, resulting in tractional retinal detachments with significant vision loss. Severe vision loss with proliferative retinopathy arises from vitreous hemorrhage. Moderate vision loss can also arise from macular edema (fluid accumulating in the center of the macula) during the proliferative or nonproliferative stages of the disease. Although proliferative disease is the main cause of blinding in diabetic retinopathy, macular edema is more frequent and is the leading cause of moderate vision loss in people with diabetes.

Screening
There is potential value in screening for diabetic retinopathy because diabetic retinopathy has few visual or ocular symptoms until vision loss develops. Because treatments are primarily aimed at preventing vision loss, and retinopathy can be asymptomatic, it is important to detect disease and begin treatment early in the process. Annual dilated, indirect ophthalmoscopy, coupled with biomicroscopy or 7-standard field stereoscopic 30° fundus photography, has been considered the screening technique of choice. Because these techniques require a dedicated visit to a competent eye care professional, typically an ophthalmologist, retinopathy screening is underutilized. This underuse has resulted in the exploration of remote retinal imaging, using film or digital photography, as an alternative to direct ophthalmic examination of the retina.

Treatment
With early detection, diabetic retinopathy can be treated with modalities that can decrease the risk of severe vision loss. Tight glycemic and blood pressure control is the first line of treatment to control diabetic retinopathy, followed by laser photocoagulation for patients whose retinopathy is approaching the high-risk stage. Although laser photoacoagulation is effective at slowing the progression of retinopathy and reducing visual loss, it causes collateral damage to the retina and does not restore lost vision. Focal macular edema (characterized by leakage from discrete microaneurysms on fluorescein angiography) may be treated with focal laser photocoagulation, while diffuse macular edema (characterized by generalized macular edema on fluorescein angiography) may be treated with grid laser photocoagulation. Corticosteroids may reduce vascular permeability and inhibit vascular endothelial growth factor production, but are associated with serious adverse events including cataracts and glaucoma, with damage to the optic nerve. Corticosteroids can also worsen diabetes control. Vascular endothelial growth factor inhibitors (eg, ranibizumab, bevacizumab, pegaptanib), which reduce permeability and block the pathway leading to new blood vessel formation (angiogenesis), are being evaluated for the treatment of diabetic macular edema and PDR.

Digital Photography and Transmission Systems for Retinal Imaging
A number of photographic methods have been evaluated that capture images of the retina to be interpreted by expert readers, who may or may not be located proximately to the patient. Retinal imaging can be performed using digital retinal photographs with (mydriatic) or without (nonmydriatic) dilating of the pupil. One approach is mydriatic standard field 35-mm stereoscopic color fundus photography. Digital fundus photography has also been evaluated as an alternative to conventional film photography. Digital imaging has the advantage of easier acquisition, transmission, and storage. Digital images of the retina can also be acquired in a primary care setting and evaluated by trained readers in a remote location, in consultation with retinal specialists.

Summary
For individuals who have diabetes without known diabetic retinopathy who receive digital retinal imaging with optometrist or ophthalmologist image interpretation, the evidence includes retrospective studies comparing the accuracy of digital screening with standard methods, systematic reviews of
these studies, and a randomized controlled trial. Relevant outcomes include test accuracy and validity, change in disease status, and functional outcomes. A number of studies have reported on the agreement between direct ophthalmoscopy and photography and between standard film and digital imaging regarding the presence and stage of retinopathy. The studies have generally found high levels of agreement between retinal examination and imaging. There is limited direct evidence related to visual outcomes for patients evaluated with a strategy of retinal telescreening. However, given evidence from the large Early Treatment Diabetic Retinopathy Study that early retinopathy treatment improves outcomes, coupled with studies showing high concordance between the screening methods used in Early Treatment Diabetic Retinopathy Study and a randomized controlled trial demonstrating higher uptake of screening with a telescreening strategy, a strong chain of evidence can be made that telescreening is associated with improved health outcomes. Digital imaging systems have the additional advantages of short examination time and the ability to perform the test in the primary care physician setting. For individuals who cannot or would not be able to access an eye care professional at the recommended screening intervals, the use of telescreening has low risk and is very likely to increase the likelihood of retinopathy detection. The evidence is sufficient to determine that the technology results in a meaningful improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have diabetes without known diabetic retinopathy who receive digital retinal imaging with automated image interpretation, the evidence includes retrospective studies and a prospective study comparing the accuracy of automated scoring of digital images with standard methods. Relevant outcomes include test accuracy and validity, change in disease status, and functional outcomes. The available studies have tended to report high sensitivity with moderate specificity, although there is variability across studies. Also, available studies have reported on different automated interpretation systems. These scoring systems have potential to improve screening in the primary care setting. However, given the variability in test characteristics across different systems, there is uncertainty about the accuracy of automated scoring systems in practice. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

**Policy History**

<table>
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<td>4/2017</td>
<td>New references added from BCBSA National medical policy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/2016</td>
<td>New references added from BCBSA National medical policy.</td>
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<td>5/2016</td>
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<td>12/2014</td>
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<td>6/2014</td>
<td>Updated Coding section with ICD10 procedure and diagnosis codes, effective 10/2015.</td>
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<td>1/2014</td>
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**Information Pertaining to All Blue Cross Blue Shield Medical Policies**

Click on any of the following terms to access the relevant information:

- [Medical Policy Terms of Use](#)
- [Managed Care Guidelines](#)
- [Indemnity/PPO Guidelines](#)
References