

# Local Coverage Determination (LCD): Cataract Surgery in Adults (L34203)

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## Contractor Information

CONTRACTOR NAME	CONTRACT TYPE	CONTRACT NUMBER	JURISDICTION	STATE(S)
Noridian Healthcare Solutions, LLC	A and B MAC	01111 - MAC A	J - E	California - Entire State
Noridian Healthcare Solutions, LLC	A and B MAC	01112 - MAC B	J - E	California - Northern
Noridian Healthcare Solutions, LLC	A and B MAC	01182 - MAC B	J - E	California - Southern
Noridian Healthcare Solutions, LLC	A and B MAC	01211 - MAC A	J - E	American Samoa Guam Hawaii Northern Mariana Islands
Noridian Healthcare Solutions, LLC	A and B MAC	01212 - MAC B	J - E	American Samoa Guam Hawaii Northern Mariana Islands
Noridian Healthcare Solutions, LLC	A and B MAC	01311 - MAC A	J - E	Nevada
Noridian Healthcare Solutions, LLC	A and B MAC	01312 - MAC B	J - E	Nevada
Noridian Healthcare Solutions, LLC	A and B MAC	01911 - MAC A	J - E	American Samoa California - Entire State Guam Hawaii Nevada Northern Mariana Islands

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# LCD Information

## Document Information

**LCD ID**

L34203

**LCD Title**

Cataract Surgery in Adults

**Proposed LCD in Comment Period**

N/A

**Source Proposed LCD**

DL34203

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## **CMS National Coverage Policy**

Title XVIII of the Social Security Act §1862(a)(7) excludes routine physical examinations.

Title XVIII of the Social Security Act, §1862 (a)(1)(A) allows coverage and payment for only those services that are considered to be reasonable and necessary for the diagnosis or treatment of illness or injury or to improve the functioning of a malformed body member.

Title XVIII of the Social Security Act, §1833(e) prohibits Medicare Payment for any claim which lacks the necessary information to process the claim.

Code of Federal Regulations 42 CFR CH.IV [411.15(b)(2)&(3)and(o)(1)&(2)] Services excluded from coverage

Code of Federal Regulations 42 CFR CH. IV [416.65] Covered surgical procedures

CMS Manual System, Pub 100-03, *Medicare National Coverage Determinations Manual*, Chapter 1, Part 1, §80.10, Phaco-Emulsification Procedure-Cataract Extraction

CMS Manual System, Pub 100-04, *Medicare Claims Processing Manual* Chapter 12, §§40.6, 40.7, Claims for Multiple Surgeries, Claims for Bilateral Surgeries

## **Coverage Guidance**

### **Coverage Indications, Limitations, and/or Medical Necessity**

Cataract is defined as an opacity or loss of optical clarity of the crystalline lens. Cataract development follows a continuum extending from minimal changes in the crystalline lens to the extreme stage of total opacity. Cataracts may be due to a variety of causes. Age-related cataract (senile cataract) is the most common type found in adults. Other types are pediatric (both congenital and acquired), traumatic, toxic and secondary (meaning the result of another disease process) cataract.

Most cataracts are not visible to the naked eye until they become dense enough (mature or hypermature) to cause blindness. However, a cataract at any stage of development can be observed through a sufficiently dilated pupil using a slit lamp biomicroscope. In settings where this instrument is unavailable (e.g. skilled nursing facility), a direct ophthalmoscope can be used to assess the degree to which the fundus reflectivity (red reflex) is impaired by the ocular media. There is no scientifically proven medical (i.e. non-surgical) treatment for cataracts.

In general, cataract surgery is performed to alleviate visual impairments attributable to lens opacity. There are uncommon situations when lens extraction becomes medically necessary for anatomic rather than optical reasons. These include lens induced angle closure (e.g., microspherophakia) and lens subluxation (e.g. Marfan syndrome). In other situations, cataract extraction might be medically indicated with relatively less opacity because of intolerable optical imbalance. Most commonly, this would be due to surgically induced anisometropia (a significant difference in refractive errors between the eyes) or aniseikonia (a difference in magnification as a result of prior lens extraction in the one eye). Some patients may elect lens removal and replacement primarily for refractive benefits to reduce their dependence on spectacles. Such elective procedures are not medically necessary and are called "refractive lens

exchanges” to distinguish them from medically indicated cataract surgery. Finally, advanced cataracts may need to be removed to properly visualize, treat, and monitor retinal disease, apart from the patient’s visual symptoms and potential.

This policy statement defines the medical necessity for cataract and other lens extraction in adults, and specifies the required documentation of the preoperative evaluation necessary to justify the procedure.

### **MEDICAL NECESSITY**

Lens extraction is considered medically necessary and therefore covered by Medicare when one (or more) of the following conditions or circumstances are documented in the medical record (see Documentation Requirements):

1. Cataract causing symptomatic (i.e., causing the patient to seek medical attention) impairment of visual function not correctable with a tolerable change in glasses or contact lenses resulting in the patient's inability to function satisfactorily while performing Activities of Daily Life including, but not limited to reading, viewing television, driving, or meeting vocational or recreational needs.
2. Concomitant intraocular disease (e.g., diabetic retinopathy or intraocular tumor) requiring monitoring or treatment that is prevented by the presence of cataract.
3. Lens-induced disease threatening vision or ocular health (including, but not limited to, phacomorphic or phacolytic glaucoma).
4. High probability of accelerating cataract development as a result of a concomitant or subsequent procedure (e.g., pars plana vitrectomy, iridocyclectomy, procedure for ocular trauma) and treatments such as external beam irradiation.
5. Cataract interfering with the performance of vitreoretinal surgery.
6. Intolerable anisometropia or aniseikonia uncorrectable with glasses or contact lenses that exists as a result of lens extraction in the first eye (despite satisfactorily corrected monocular visual acuity).

Any circumstances not listed may be considered based on the standard of care and other factors related to medical necessity at redetermination.

Surgery is not deemed to be medically necessary purely on the basis of lens opacity in the absence of symptoms.

### **Visual Acuity**

The Snellen visual acuity chart is an excellent way of measuring distance refractive error (e.g. myopia, hyperopia, astigmatism) in healthy eyes, and is in wide clinical use. However, testing only with high contrast letters viewed in dark room conditions will underestimate the functional impairments caused by some cataracts in common real-life situations such as day or nighttime glare conditions, poor contrast environments or reading, halos and starbursts at night, and impaired optical quality causing monocular diplopia and ghosting.

While a single arbitrary objective measure might be desirable a specific Snellen visual acuity alone can neither rule in nor rule out the need for surgery. Visual acuity should be considered in the context of the patient’s visual impairment and other ocular findings.

### **Specialized Ophthalmic Testing**

For circumstances where the placement of an intraocular lens (IOL) is anticipated, A-scan ultrasound testing or partial coherence interferometry, keratometry (may be from corneal topography), and IOL calculations and selection would be anticipated to be performed.

Additional ancillary testing as appropriate in the establishment or exclusion of medical necessity. This should be

directed by specific patient complaint or symptom where possible.

Certain testing would **not** be anticipated to be required in a pre-operative workup when performing routine cataract surgery. These include, but are not limited to:

- a. B-Scan/Ultrasound of the Posterior Segment
- b. Glare Testing
- c. Brightness Acuity Testing
- d. Low-contrast visual acuity testing
- e. Contrast sensitivity testing
- f. Potential vision testing
- g. Formal visual fields
- h. Fluorescein angiography
- i. External photography
- j. Corneal pachymetry/specular microscopy
- k. Specialized color vision tests
- l. Electrophysiological tests

However, there may be legitimate reasons to perform these tests. For example (other reasonable examples are possible):

- a. B-scan ultrasound testing would be medically necessary to assess such structures for the purpose of surgical decision-making in circumstances where an adequate view of the intraocular structures cannot be obtained because of dense cataract,
- b. Glare testing/brightness acuity testing would be medically necessary in a patient with a complaint of difficulty driving at night, and
- c. Corrected Snellen visual acuity testing under low-contrast conditions or formal contrast sensitivity testing would be medically necessary to uncover or demonstrate functional impairments correlated with the patient's symptoms.

In general, any performed ancillary testing must be conducted so as not to deliberately bias the decision toward the performance of surgery (e.g., glare testing done on abnormally high settings inconsistent with the instructions of the testing device's manufacturer, etc.), and must have results and indications of medical necessary properly documented (see Documentation Requirements).

## **Second Eye Surgery**

Should a significant cataract also be present in the second eye, as supported by *Cataract in the Adult Eye*, a "Preferred Practice Pattern" by the American Academy of Ophthalmology, except in special circumstances, surgery is generally not performed in both eyes at the same time because of the potential for bilateral visual loss.

In the more common situation where surgery is performed sequentially in the other eye on separate days for bilateral visually symptomatic cataracts the appropriate interval between the first-eye surgery and second-eye surgery is influenced by several factors:

1. The patient's visual needs

2. The patient's preferences
3. Visual function in the second eye
4. The medical and refractive stability of the first eye
5. The need to restore binocular vision and resolve anisometropia,
6. An adequate interval of time has elapsed to evaluate and treat early postoperative complications in first eye, such as endophthalmitis; and/or
7. Logistical and travel considerations of the patient.

The patient and the ophthalmologist should discuss the benefits, risks, need, and timing of second-eye surgery when they have had the opportunity to evaluate the results of surgery on the first eye, taking into account the above factors.

If the decision to perform cataract extraction in both eyes is made prior to the first (sequential) cataract extraction, the documentation must support the medical necessity for each procedure to be performed.

### **Complex Cataract Surgery**

Note that a procedure coded as "Complex Cataract Surgery" must meet all other requirements for Cataract Surgery as outlined in the Billing and Coding Article A57195

### **Summary of Evidence**

N/A

### **Analysis of Evidence (Rationale for Determination)**

N/A

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## **General Information**

### **Associated Information**

#### **Documentation Requirements:**

The following documentation must be present in the medical chart:

#### **For Visually-Symptomatic Cataract:**

- a. A statement indicating that specific symptomatic (i.e., causing the patient to seek medical attention)

impairment of visual function resulting in the patient's inability to function satisfactorily while performing Activities of Daily Life. Such activities would typically include, but are not limited to, reading, viewing television, driving, or meeting vocational or recreational expectations. The patient's own words should be included in the statement where possible.

- b. A best-corrected Snellen visual acuity at distance (and near if the primary visual impairment is at near) as determined by a careful refraction under standard testing conditions as appropriate must be recorded to establish the inability to correct the patient's visual function with a tolerable change to glasses or contact lenses. Neither uncorrected visual acuity nor corrected acuity with the patient's current prescription will satisfy this requirement. The refraction may be performed by the surgeon or by suitably trained staff in the surgeon's practice as permitted by law.
- c. A degree of lens opacity that correlates with the impairment of best-corrected visual acuity when cataract is the primary cause of visual compromise.
- d. An attestation supported by documented symptoms and physical findings in the medical record indicating that the patient's impairment of visual function is believed not to be correctable with a tolerable change in glasses or contact lenses.
- e. When one or more concomitant ocular diseases are present that potentially affect visual function (e.g., macular degeneration or diabetic retinopathy), the attestation should indicate that cataract is believed to be significantly contributing to the patient's visual impairment.
- f. A statement that the patient desires surgical correction, that the risks, benefits, and alternatives have been explained, and that a reasonable expectation exists that lens surgery will significantly improve both the visual and functional status of the patient.

#### **For Complex Cataract Surgery:**

Note that a procedure coded as "Complex Cataract Surgery" must meet all other requirements for Cataract Surgery as outlined in the Coding and Billing Article A57195

#### **For Other types of Cataract:**

- a. A statement indicating that the appropriate medical condition or circumstance exists and the specific reason for surgical intervention (e.g., "Cataract surgery is being performed to establish clear media for the treatment [or monitoring] of diabetic retinopathy).
- b. A statement that the patient desires surgical correction, that the risks, benefits, and alternatives have been explained, and that the patient understands that the surgery is being done **to address the medical condition or circumstance**. If vision is specifically not expected to improve, the statement should include the patient's understanding of that fact.

#### **For All types of Cataract:**

- a. An appropriate preoperative ophthalmologic evaluation, which generally includes a comprehensive ophthalmologic exam (or its equivalent components occurring over a series of visits). Certain examination components may be appropriately excluded based on the specific condition and/or urgency of surgical intervention.
- b. Results and interpretation of specialized ophthalmic studies done for medically-necessary reasons unique to the patient's situation.
- c. Results and interpretation of specialized ophthalmic studies that are **not** expected to be routinely performed for routine cataract surgery with **clear statements of the reasons they are needed to establish or exclude medical necessity**

In general, all documentation supporting medical necessity should be legible, maintained in the patient's medical record, meet all Medicare signature requirements, and must be made available to the A/B MAC or other CMS review entity upon request.

## Utilization Requirements

Medicare benefits include a conventional intraocular lens (IOL) following cataract surgery, facility supplies and physician services to implant the conventional IOL and one pair of glasses or contact lenses as a prosthetic device post-operative.

Ancillary tests that are **not** routinely indicated in the preoperative workup for cataract surgery (see "Specialized Ophthalmic testing") will not be considered a covered benefit if performed unless medical necessity is defended by a clear statement in the patient's record.

If an optometrist or an ophthalmologist who is not the surgeon performs biometry for intraocular lens power calculation, he/she should do so in coordination with the operating surgeon so that only one procedure is necessary. If biometry is repeated by the operating surgeon due to inadequacy of the first study, the original eye care physician/provider should anticipate not being reimbursed for the study.

## Sources of Information

1. American Academy of Ophthalmology. *Cataract in the Adult Eye*. Preferred Practice Pattern. San Francisco. American Academy of Ophthalmology, 2006. [Available at: http://one.aao.org/CE/PracticeGuidelines/PPP\\_Content.aspx?cid=a80a87ce-9042-4677-85d7-4b876deed276](http://one.aao.org/CE/PracticeGuidelines/PPP_Content.aspx?cid=a80a87ce-9042-4677-85d7-4b876deed276) Accessed October, 2016.
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4. American Academy of Ophthalmology, American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery, et al. Utilization, Appropriate Care, and Quality of Life for Patients with Cataracts. *Ophthalmology*. 2006;113(10):1878-82.

## Bibliography

N/A

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# Revision History Information



REVISION HISTORY DATE	REVISION HISTORY NUMBER	REVISION HISTORY EXPLANATION	REASON(S) FOR CHANGE
10/01/2019	R2	10/01/2019: At this time 21st Century Cures Act will apply to new and revised LCDs that restrict coverage which requires comment and notice. This revision is not a restriction to the coverage.  LCD was converted to the "no-codes" format.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revisions Due To Code Removal</li> </ul>
10/10/2017	R1	08/07/2017: At this time 21st Century Cures Act will apply to new and revised LCDs that restrict coverage which requires comment and notice. This revision is not a restriction to the coverage determination; and, therefore not all the fields included on the LCD are applicable as noted in this policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of Uniform LCDs Within a MAC Jurisdiction</li> </ul>

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## Associated Documents

### Attachments

N/A

### Related Local Coverage Documents

Article(s)

A57195 - Billing and Coding: Cataract Surgery in Adults

A55688 - Response to Comments: Cataract Surgery in Adults

LCD(s)

DL34203

- (MCD Archive Site)

### Related National Coverage Documents

N/A

### Public Version(s)

Updated on 09/20/2019 with effective dates 10/01/2019 - N/A

Updated on 08/09/2017 with effective dates 10/10/2017 - 09/30/2019

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## Keywords

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- Adults