

Optometry Coding & Billing Alert

FBR: 65205-65222: Location, Number Determines Correct Foreign Body Removal Code

Don't automatically code each FB separately, say experts.

If a patient has multiple foreign bodies in the eye, can you code each one separately? The answer, coding experts say, depends on the specific scenario.

Scenario 1: Multiple FBs in Right Cornea

If a patient has multiple foreign bodies in the same site in the same eye -- for instance, the conjunctiva or the cornea -- you can only report one procedure, no matter how many FBs you remove.

For foreign bodies in the cornea, report one unit of 65220 (Removal of foreign body, external eye; corneal, without slit lamp) or 65222 (... corneal, with slit lamp), depending on whether you used a slit lamp to remove the foreign bodies. Append modifier RT to indicate which eye was treated.

Scenario 2: FBs in Right Conjunctiva and Right Cornea

In the National Correct Coding Initiative, the codes concerning FBs in the conjunctiva, 65205 (Removal of foreign body, external eye; conjunctival superficial) and 65210 (... conjunctival embedded [includes concretions], subconjunctival, or scleral nonperforating), are not bundled with corneal FB codes 65220 and 65222. This means you are free to report both codes -- 65210 and 65222, for example -- separately.

Tip: Send along documentation clarifying that the FBs were in different parts of the eye. But insurers don't always see it that way -- some will pay for only one removal procedure. Your strategy? Code the one that has the highest fee -- in this case, the corneal FB removal (65222-RT).

Scenario 3: FBs in Both Corneas

If you remove foreign bodies from the right cornea and the left cornea, report both removals -- report 65222-RT and 65222-LT, or 65222-50 (Bilateral procedure).

Medicare payers will reimburse 150 percent of the fee schedule amount for 65222 performed bilaterally. Based on the 2012 fee schedule, 65222 performed unilaterally should reimburse \$75.22 (before geographic adjustments are factored in). Claiming 65222-50 should yield \$112.83.

Key: To find out if any CPT® code is bilateral or unilateral, you can check your Medicare fee schedule, says **Sylvia Conrad**, insurance coordinator with Your Eye Solution in Jacksonville, Fla. You can find the bilateral indicator in column "Z" ("Bilat Surg") of the Physician Fee Schedule spreadsheet.

Scenario 4: FBs in Right Cornea and Left Conjunctiva

Since the FBs are in different eyes, you can report one unit of 65205-LT or 65210-LT along with one unit of 65220-RT or 65222-RT. Your practice should earn the full amount for both codes.