

Optometry Coding & Billing Alert

Reader Question: Catch More Copays With These Billing Tips

Question: One of the most unpleasant chores in our office is collecting copays. We have the typical "Payment is expected at time of service" sign, but it's hard to enforce. Is there any way to make this less painful?

South Carolina Subscriber

Answer: Less painful, perhaps, but not painless. You can improve your copayment and deductible collection rates without hounding patients by having office staff do the following:

1. verify patients' insurance coverage when scheduling appointments
2. talk to patients before their appointments about their financial responsibility for copayments, deductibles and noncovered services
3. give patients an up-front estimate of what they will owe
4. ask for payment of copayments and deductibles when patients register for their appointments
5. offer flexible payment options, like credit cards or extended payment plans.

Some billers suggest that you keep a simple flow chart or spreadsheet at the front desk that lists all insurance companies your practice contracts with and other relevant information for each company, including copays. The chart should be made well known to all front-desk staff and kept in an easily accessible spot.