

Optometry Coding & Billing Alert

Reporting Each Foreign-Body Removal Separately? Not So Fast

FB removal coding depends on the site -- and sometimes on the carrier

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, says **Raequell Duran, CPC**, president of Practice Solutions in Santa Barbara, Calif. This means you are free to report both codes -- 65210 and 65222, for example -- separately.

Tip: -I would definitely send along documentation, - clarifying that the FBs were in different parts of the eye, says **Deena Happel, CPC, CCS-P, CMA**, coder and accounts manager for Lifetime Eyecare in Geneseo, Ill. 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 2006 fee schedule, 65222 performed unilaterally should reimburse \$70.49 (before geographic adjustments are factored in). Claiming 65222-50 should yield \$105.73.

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.