

Cataracts - Referral Management

RMG: R-0024 (AC)

[Link to Codes](#)

- Clinical Indications
- Evidence Summary
 - Criteria
 - Rationale
 - Related CMS Coverage Guidance
- References
- Footnotes
- Codes

Clinical Indications

- Referral for cataracts may be indicated for **1 or more** of the following(1)(2)(3)(4):
 - Endocrinology referral for evaluation or management of underlying endocrine condition associated with cataract (eg, diabetes, hypoparathyroidism)(5)
 - Genetic medicine referral for evaluation or management of genetic disorder associated with congenital cataract (eg, Alport syndrome, Down syndrome, galactosemia, Lowe syndrome, myotonic dystrophy)(6)(7)(8)(9)
 - Nutrition referral for dietary counseling (eg, galactosemia causing cataract in child)(9)
 - ◻ Ophthalmology referral for evaluation or management of **1 or more** of the following(7)(10):
 - Cataract in child or infant[A](6)(11)(12)(13)
 - Changes in refraction due to cataract
 - Clinically significant difference in acuity between eyes (ie, anisometropia) in presence of cataract[B]
 - Coincident eye pain, red eye, or photophobia with cataract[C](14)
 - High-risk patient, as indicated by **1 or more** of the following(7):
 - Diabetes mellitus(15)(16)(17)
 - Down syndrome(18)
 - Drug-induced lens changes (eg, prednisone, phenothiazine)
 - Exposure to ionizing radiation(19)
 - Hypocalcemia
 - Myotonic dystrophy
 - Ocular trauma(20)
 - Uveitis(21)(22)
 - Wilson disease
 - Lens-induced angle closure (eg, phacomorphic glaucoma)[C](23)(24)
 - Lens-induced inflammation (eg, phacolysis, phacoanaphylactic endophthalmitis)[C](24)(25)
 - Lens-induced uveitis(26)(27)
 - Lens opacity interferes with optimal diagnosis or treatment of other eye conditions (eg, diabetic retinopathy).
 - Visual symptoms due to lens opacity impairing adult patient's quality of life, as indicated by **1 or more** of the following(26)(28)(29)(30):
 - Decreased night vision
 - Difficulty seeing fine details (eg, reading, driving)(31)
 - Glare sensitivity
 - Halos

Evidence Summary

Criteria

The evidence for the clinical indications found in this guideline includes 25 published peer reviewed articles, 2 specialty society or other evidence-based guidelines, 1 Cochrane systematic review, and 3 book sections.

Rationale

Use of this MCG care guideline helps the clinician identify specific complex factors of a patient's condition that may need specialist consultation. It provides evidence-based clinical criteria to help decide when a patient should be referred to a specialist, ensuring timely specialty care. Additionally, this guideline can help limit unnecessary differences in treatment, like variable criteria for emergency or subspecialist referral, thereby promoting equal access and quality of care for similar patients, regardless of location, facility, or clinician.

Related CMS Coverage Guidance

None applicable

References

1. Miller KM, et al. Cataract in the Adult Eye. Preferred Practice Pattern [Internet] American Academy of Ophthalmology. 2021 Accessed at: <https://www.aao.org/>. [accessed 2025 Sep 04] [Context Link 1, 2, 3]
2. Cataracts in Adults: Management. NICE guideline NG77 [Internet] National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. 2017 Oct Accessed at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/>. [accessed 2024 Sep 23] [Context Link 1] View abstract...
3. Machin A. Cataracts. *InnovAiT* 2018;11(11):634-638. DOI: 10.1177/1755738018792699. [Context Link 1]
4. Cicinelli MV, Buchan JC, Nicholson M, Varadaraj V, Khanna RC. Cataracts. *Lancet* 2023;401(10374):377-389. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(22)01839-6. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
5. Kiziltoprak H, Tekin K, Inanc M, Goker YS. Cataract in diabetes mellitus. *World Journal of Diabetes* 2019;10(3):140-153. DOI: 10.4239/wjd.v10.i3.140. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
6. Mohammadpour M, et al. Updates on managements of pediatric cataract. *Journal of Current Ophthalmology* 2019;31(2):118-126. DOI: 10.1016/j.joco.2018.11.005. [Context Link 1, 2, 3] View abstract...
7. Howes FW. Indications for lens surgery/indications for application of different lens surgery techniques. In: Yanoff M, Duker JS, editors. *Ophthalmology*. 6th ed. Elsevier; 2023:329-336. [Context Link 1, 2, 3, 4]
8. Messina-Baas O, Cuevas-Covarrubias SA. Inherited congenital cataract: a guide to suspect the genetic etiology in the cataract genesis. *Molecular Syndromology* 2017;8(2):58-78. DOI: 10.1159/000455752. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
9. Davison JE. Eye involvement in inherited metabolic disorders. *Therapeutic Advances in Ophthalmology* 2020 Jan-Dec;12:Online. DOI: 10.1177/2515841420979109. [Context Link 1, 2] View abstract...
10. Howes FW. Patient workup for cataract surgery. In: Yanoff M, Duker JS, editors. *Ophthalmology*. 6th ed. Elsevier; 2023:320-323. [Context Link 1]
11. Lim ME, Buckley EG, Prakalapakorn SG. Update on congenital cataract surgery management. *Current Opinion in Ophthalmology* 2017;28(1):87-92. DOI: 10.1097/ICU.0000000000000324. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
12. Singh R, Barker L, Chen SI, Shah A, Long V, Dahlmann-Noor A. Surgical interventions for bilateral congenital cataract in children aged two years and under. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2022, Issue 9. Art. No.: CD003171. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD003171.pub3. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
13. Schmidt DC, Eriksson F, Bach-Holm D, Gronskov K, Kessel L. Long-term risk of glaucoma after cataract surgery in childhood. *Acta Ophthalmologica* 2024;102(6):667-673. DOI: 10.1111/aos.16636. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
14. Sangwan VS, Gupta S, Das S. Cataract surgery in ocular surface diseases: clinical challenges and outcomes. *Current Opinion in Ophthalmology* 2018;29(1):81-87. DOI: 10.1097/ICU.0000000000000441. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
15. Go JA, Mamalis CA, Khandelwal SS. Cataract surgery considerations for diabetic patients. *Current Diabetes Reports* 2021;21(12):Online. DOI: 10.1007/s11892-021-01418-z. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
16. Zhang JH, et al. A systematic review of clinical practice guidelines for cataract: evidence to support the development of the WHO package of eye care interventions. *Vision (Basel, Switzerland)* 2022;6(2):36. DOI: 10.3390/vision6020036. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
17. Xu Y, et al. Sex-specific social, lifestyle, and physical health risk factors in cataracts development. *Eye (London, England)* 2024;38(15):2939-2946. DOI: 10.1038/s41433-024-03193-z. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
18. Self JE, et al. Cataract management in children: a review of the literature and current practice across five large UK centres. *Eye (London, England)* 2020;34(12):2197-2218. DOI: 10.1038/s41433-020-1115-6. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
19. Majhail NS, et al. Recommended screening and preventive practices for long-term survivors after hematopoietic cell transplantation. *Bone Marrow Transplantation* 2012;47(3):337-341. DOI: 10.1038/bmt.2012.5. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
20. Soleimani M, et al. All about traumatic cataracts: narrative review. *Journal of Cataract and Refractive Surgery* 2024;50(7):760-766. DOI: 10.1097/j.jcrs.0000000000001424. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
21. Hsu AY, et al. Cataract development among pediatric patients with uveitis. *JAMA Network Open* 2024;7(7):Online. DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.19366. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
22. Maghsoudlou P, Epps SJ, Guly CM, Dick AD. Uveitis in adults: a review. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2025;DOI: 10.1001/jama.2025.4358. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
23. Marchini G, Ceruti P, Vizzari G, Berzaghi D, Zampieri A. Management of concomitant cataract and glaucoma. *Developments in Ophthalmology* 2017;59:155-64. DOI: 10.1159/000458494. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
24. Llop SM, Papaliodis GN. Cataract surgery complications in uveitis patients: a review article. *Seminars in Ophthalmology* 2018;33(1):64-69. DOI: 10.1080/08820538.2017.1353815. [Context Link 1, 2] View abstract...
25. Zarei-Ghanavati S, Hadi Y, Habibi A, Khorasani MA, Yoo SH. Cataract and diabetes: a review of the literature. *Journal of Cataract and Refractive Surgery* 2024;Online. DOI: 10.1097/j.jcrs.0000000000001547. [Context Link 1] View abstract...

26. Canadian Ophthalmological Society evidence-based clinical practice guidelines for cataract surgery in the adult eye. Canadian Journal of Ophthalmology 2008;43 Suppl 1:S7-S57. DOI: 10.1139/i08-133. [Context Link 1, 2] View abstract...
27. Conway MD, Stern E, Enfield DB, Peyman GA. Management of cataract in uveitis patients. Current Opinion in Ophthalmology 2018;29(1):69-74. DOI: 10.1097/ICU.0000000000000438. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
28. Watkinson S, Seewoodhary R. Cataract management: effect on patients' quality of life. Nursing Standard 2015;29(21):42-8. DOI: 10.7748/ns.29.21.42.e9222. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
29. Marra KV, Wagley S, Kuperwaser MC, Campo R, Arroyo JG. Care of older adults: role of primary care physicians in the treatment of cataracts and macular degeneration. Journal of the American Geriatrics Society 2016;64(2):369-77. DOI: 10.1111/jgs.13927. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
30. Veerarahavan N. Adult eye conditions: primary open-angle glaucoma and cataract. FP Essentials 2022;519:19-23. [Context Link 1] View abstract...
31. Eye guidelines. In: Cash JC, editor. Family Practice Guidelines. 6th ed. Springer Publishing; 2023:140-163. [Context Link 1]

Footnotes

[A] Early surgical intervention for cataracts in an infant or child can prevent irreversible amblyopia.(6) [A in Context Link 1]

[B] Significant difference in acuity between eyes, anisometropia, creates inhibition of binocular vision. This may occur iatrogenically after performing cataract surgery in only one eye; therefore, cataract surgery may be appropriate at an earlier stage of development in the second eye.(1) [B in Context Link 1]

[C] Patients with hypermature cataracts can develop an immune reaction to cataract protein (phacoanaphylactic endophthalmitis) or glaucoma.(1)(7) [C in Context Link 1, 2, 3]

Codes

ICD-10 Diagnosis: E08.36, E09.36, E10.36, E11.36, E13.36, H25.011, H25.012, H25.013, H25.019, H25.031, H25.032, H25.033, H25.039, H25.041, H25.042, H25.043, H25.049, H25.091, H25.092, H25.093, H25.099, H25.10, H25.11, H25.12, H25.13, H25.20, H25.21, H25.22, H25.23, H25.811, H25.812, H25.813, H25.819, H25.89, H25.9, H26.001, H26.002, H26.003, H26.009, H26.011, H26.012, H26.013, H26.019, H26.031, H26.032, H26.033, H26.039, H26.041, H26.042, H26.043, H26.049, H26.051, H26.052, H26.053, H26.059, H26.061, H26.062, H26.063, H26.069, H26.09, H26.101, H26.102, H26.103, H26.109, H26.111, H26.112, H26.113, H26.119, H26.121, H26.122, H26.123, H26.129, H26.131, H26.132, H26.133, H26.139, H26.20, H26.211, H26.212, H26.213, H26.219, H26.221, H26.222, H26.223, H26.229, H26.231, H26.232, H26.233, H26.239, H26.30, H26.31, H26.32, H26.33, H26.40, H26.411, H26.412, H26.413, H26.419, H26.491, H26.492, H26.493, H26.499, H26.8, H26.9, H28, H44.19, H59.021, H59.022, H59.023, H59.029, Q12.0, T85.21XA, T85.21XD, T85.21XS, T85.22XA, T85.22XD, T85.22XS, T85.29XA, T85.29XD, T85.29XS, Z13.5, Z98.41, Z98.42, Z98.49 [Hide]

MCG Health
Ambulatory Care 30th Edition
Copyright © 2026 MCG Health, LLC
All Rights Reserved

Last Update: 1/25/2026 1:36:27 AM
Build Number: 30.0.2026012500524.025256