

Medical Affairs Policy & Procedure

Title/Service: Vision Therapy (Orthoptic Training, Orthoptics, Pleoptics)

Revised	
Reviewed	02/21/03, 02/02/05, 09/22/06, 11/16/07, 11/21/08, 12/28/09, 10/22/10, 11/18/11
Developed	
Policy Committee Approval	11/18/11

Description:

Vision therapy includes a variety of treatment programs and devices used to improve dysfunctions of the visual system. Orthoptics (exercises to improve the function of eye muscles) and pleoptics (exercises to improve impaired vision) are common forms of vision therapy. The use of vision therapy is controversial, with ophthalmologists and optometrists often holding differing viewpoints.

Indications of Coverage:

Vision therapy is considered medically necessary for any of the following conditions:

Strabismus (misalignment of the eyes, including exotropias and estropias)

Convergence insufficiency (decreased ability to maintain bilateral eye alignment as objects move from far to near)

Convergence excess (decreased ability to maintain bilateral eye alignment as objects move from near to far)

Anomalies of divergence (increases in the outward turning of the eyes when focusing on distant objects)

Up to ten sessions are considered medically necessary. An additional ten sessions are considered necessary if there is documentation of improvement after the first ten sessions.

Limitations of Coverage:

Review contract and endorsements for exclusions and prior authorization or benefit requirements. **(Note: many policies have a specific exclusion for vision therapy. This would include both orthoptics and pleoptics).**

If used for a condition/diagnosis other than is listed in the Indications of Coverage, deny as experimental or investigative.

If used for a condition/diagnosis that is listed in the Indications of Coverage, but the criteria are not met, deny as not medically necessary.

Vision therapy is considered experimental or investigative for the treatment of dyslexia and learning disabilities.

Documentation Required:

- History and physical and office notes

Rationale:

There is little evidence supporting the effectiveness of vision therapy. However, a joint statement from the American Academy of Optometry and American Optometric Association supports vision therapy as a tool for improving visual skills.

References:

1. No authors listed. American Academy of Ophthalmology. Complementary therapy assessment. Visual training for refractive errors. American Academy of Ophthalmology Complementary Therapy Task Force. October 2004. Available at: one.aaof.org/CE/PracticeGuidelines/Therapy_Content.aspx?cid=d7238b2b-a59f-49f6-9f30-64d1e84efc3b. Accessed: 7 Oct 10.
2. No authors listed. American Academy of Optometry. Vision therapy. A joint organizational policy statement of the American Academy of Optometry and the American Optometric Association. May 1999. Available at: www.aaopt.org/about/position/index.asp. Accessed: 7 Oct 10.
3. No authors listed. Learning disabilities, dyslexia, and vision: a subject review. Committee on Children with Disabilities, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO), American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus (AAPOS). Pediatrics. 1998 Nov; 102(5):1217 - 1219. Available at: pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/102/5/1217. Accessed: 7 Oct 10.

Approved by the Medical Director