

Sight Test Intervals - Memorandum of Understanding

Optical Confederation Reminder

Contractors may have seen the new Scottish contract guidance (PCA(O)(2012)1) from [NHS Scotland](#) and the advice available from [Optometry Scotland](#) and [AOP Scotland](#) regarding sight tests intervals. Practitioners in the rest of the UK will also be familiar with their Memorandum of Understanding on sight test intervals.

Frequency of NHS Eye Examinations and Dispensing

The new sets of guidance helpfully remind all contractors and performers that

- published intervals at which claims can be made for sight tests (eg Memorandum of Understanding/Vouchers at a Glance in England and Wales, and Annex E of the Scottish GOS Contract 2006) are not necessarily minimum intervals at which patients should automatically be recalled for testing
- while it is generally recommended that healthy adults have a sight test every two years, the regulations require that you should only carry out a GOS sight test, if you think it clinically necessary. Practitioners should ensure that the reason for the sight test is clearly shown on the patient's record
- optometrists are expected to exercise their clinical judgment on a case-by-case basis when deciding when a particular patient should be recalled for their next sight test
- vouchers should not be issued for small changes in prescription simply because a patient wishes and does not need new glasses
- where a patient's prescription has not changed or the change is not clinically significant but an adult patient's existing glasses are more than 2 years old a voucher can be issued on the basis that the glasses need to be replaced due to fair wear and tear
- the regulations provide for some flexibility in sight tests intervals in that if a patient needs their NHS sight test up to a month early eg because they are going away, that is permitted. However it should not be routine practice to recall patients earlier than their planned recall interval unless they have reported a problem in which case the relevant early sight-testing code should be used.

Primary care organisations are increasingly examining GOS claims data and challenging outliers eg intervals between sight tests or NHS vouchers for very small changes in prescription. This should not be a problem provided clinical decisions are properly recorded and justifiable.

Members are reminded that practitioners should

- exercise their clinical judgement as above
- make a decision about the desirable recall interval at the time of the sight test and note the record
- be in a position to justify the sight test interval if subsequently queried by the primary care organisation or at a post payment verification visit
- record and justify why a GOS3 voucher has been issued.

Further Information

For further information, please contact your Optical Confederation representative body.

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