

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Academy for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus (AAPOS) recommend annual instrument based photoscreening (such as Plusoptix) for children beginning at age 1 – 3 years old. They also recommend visual acuity testing beginning at age 4 if possibleⁱ.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) recommends “Instrument-based screening devices for vision screening are available commercially and have had extensive validation, both in field studies and, more recently, in the pediatrician’s offices. Screening instruments detect amblyopia, high refractive error, and strabismus, which are the most common conditions producing visual impairment in children. If available, they can be used at any age but have better success after 18 months of age. Instrument-based screening can be repeated at each annual preventive medicine encounter through 5 years of age or until visual acuity can be assessed reliably using optotypes. Using these techniques in children younger than 6 years can enhance detection of conditions that may lead to amblyopia and/or strabismus compared with traditional methods of assessment.”ⁱⁱ

The USPSTF recommends vision screening at least once in all children aged 3 to 5 years to detect amblyopia or its risk factors. Grade “B” meaning there is high certainty that the net benefit is moderate and that the practice should provide this service.ⁱⁱⁱ Additionally, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires health plans to cover preventive services that have an “A” or “B” level rating.

Vision Screening Codes

X CPT^{iv} Codes

- **CPT 99177** - Instrument based ocular screening, bilateral; with on-site analysis.
- **CPT 99173** – Visual acuity testing
- CPT 99173 and 99177 should not be billed together.

X Modifiers

- 33: Created to allow providers to identify to insurance payers and providers that the service was preventive under the applicable laws, and that patient cost-sharing does not apply. For ages 3 – 5 only.
- 59: Use to indicate that a procedure or service was distinct or independent from other services performed on the same day.

ICD-10 Diagnosis Codes

Preventive Services	
Z00.121	Encounter for routine child health examination with abnormal findings
Z00.129	Encounter for routine child health examination without abnormal findings
Z02.0	Encounter for examination for admission to educational institution
Z01.00	Encounter for examination of eyes and vision without abnormal findings
Z00.01	Encounter for examination of eyes and vision with abnormal findings
Z13.5	Encounter for screening for eye and ear disorders

Commercial Payers

- ✕ Commercial reimbursement varies by payer with ranges from \$0 to over \$30.
- ✕ Many national insurance payers have established guidelines.
 - Aetna: considers one ocular photoscreening medically necessary for screening all children 3 years of age, and for screening children 4 or 5 years of age who are unable to cooperate with routine acuity screening^v
 - Cigna: Vision screening age 3 to 15; 99177 is allowed with any diagnosis; age limitation applied^{vi}
 - United Health Care: As a mass screening instrument for children ages 1-3 (ends on 4th birthday) and for children ages 4 and older who are developmentally delayed and are unable or unwilling to cooperate with routine visual acuity screening.^{vii}
 - BC/BS: varies by state
- ✕ Check with your billing manager for your specific reimbursement.
- ✕ AAP Payer Advocacy has developed a guidance advisory on Instrument Based Vision Screening dated 8/2019

State Medicaid

- ✕ Many State Medicaid plans reimburse for vision screening.
- ✕ Check with your billing manager for the specifics in your state.
- ✕ Reimbursement ranges from \$0 to \$35

The information provided in this backgrounder is compiled from various public sources and is deemed accurate as of the date of creation. The accuracy of the information is not guaranteed as information changes routinely and it is highly recommended to check with billing managers for your individual needs and reimbursements.

ⁱ <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2015/12/07/peds.2015-3396>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.aao.org/clinical-statement/visual-system-assessment-in-infants-children-young>

ⁱⁱⁱ USPSTF: Vision in children aged 6 months to 5 years; Screening dated 9/2017

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^v Aetna Ocular Photoscreening Medical Policy Bulletin dated 1/15/2020

^{vi} Cigna Administrative Policy A004 effective 4/2020

^{vii} United Health Care Preventive Medicine Reimbursement Reference Guide