

# OPHTHALMOLOGY AND OPTOMETRY CODING ALERT

Your practical adviser for ethically optimizing coding, payment, and efficiency in ophthalmology and optometry practices

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## ❖ PHE Coding

### 3 Facts About Medicare's Telephone Codes

**You have until the end of the public health emergency to collect for these services.**

Your eye care practice is likely to be performing telehealth services almost every day during the coronavirus pandemic, but it's also possible that your optometrists and ophthalmologists are handling some patient encounters over the phone. If you've been confused about how to handle phone visits, CMS offered some clarity in the form of an April 30 update that lays down specific rules about these encounters.

**Background:** Although telehealth visits (which require two-way synchronous real-time communication via audio-visual technology) are now the norm for many non-emergent evaluations, not all patients are equipped to speak to their physicians this way, and some are instead requesting phone visits, says **Carol Pohlig, BSN, RN, CPC, ACS**, senior coding and education specialist at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. Fortunately, during the public health emergency (PHE), CMS also adds audio phone calls as covered services.

**In black and white:** "A broad range of clinicians, including physicians, can now provide certain services by telephone to their patients (CPT® codes 98966 -98968; 99441-99443)," CMS says in a March 30 fact sheet.

