

BWC Policy Alert

Requirements for alternative drug testing in lieu of urine drug testing and the reimbursement of alternative drug tests

Date: Dec. 8, 2014
Policy Alert # 11-2014-01

Purpose

This BWC Policy Alert clarifies the requirements for allowable alternative drug testing (e.g., saliva and hair follicle testing) in lieu of urine drug testing (UDT), and it clarifies reimbursement requirements for alternative drug tests.

Issues

- Whether and when it is permissible to allow alternative drug-testing methods in lieu of UDT?
- If permissible, when may a managed care organization (MCO) approve payment for the alternative testing?

Discussion

BWC has received reimbursement questions concerning the appropriateness of saliva testing. At this time, BWC addresses bodily fluid drug testing in the *Urine Drug Testing* policy, and it is limited in scope to only urine testing.

Urine collection is BWC's preferred method of drug testing. However, BWC recognizes that there are medical reasons that prevent urine collection for drug tests.

BWC researched alternative drug testing methods that are permissible when a urine specimen is unobtainable for medical reasons (e.g., dialysis). The results from this research are as follows:

- Medicare, other third-party payers, and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approve of alternative methods of collection for drug testing purposes;
- Medicare and other third-party payers allow for payment of alternative drug tests;
- Medicare uses UDT billing codes for alternative drug tests.

As a result of our research, BWC determined it was appropriate to allow for the collection of alternative methods of drug testing only when a urine specimen cannot be obtained for drug tests **due solely to medical reasons**. Additionally, BWC concluded that the alternative collection methods/kits should be FDA-approved drug-testing methods/kits.

BWC is not requiring a specific alternative method/kit. Rather, the MCOs will evaluate and authorize any alternative method/kit via the standard prior authorization protocols.

Testing protocols for these collected specimens will be the same protocols as those required for UDT.

Conclusion

Alternative drug testing is only permissible when a urine collection is not possible due solely to a medical reason. Qualitative tests shall be performed on alternative drug tests, with confirmation testing as appropriate (see outlined protocols for confirmation testing within the UDT policy). MCOs shall evaluate these tests in accordance with MCO utilization protocols. Thus, MCOs must execute the prior approval authorization protocols to evaluate requests for any alternative drug testing. FDA approved test kits/devices must be used to obtain alternative specimens for drug tests.

Providers shall bill alternative drug tests under the same billing codes as those used for UDT (i.e., G0434, G0431 and 80102).

Reference

Urine Drug Testing Policy MP-21-01