Phototherapy for Seasonal Affective Disorder

Description:

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is defined as a history of major depressive episodes that recur regularly at a particular time of year, typically winter. SAD is associated with decreases in ambient light exposure during the winter season; therefore, phototherapy, delivered by a light box or light visor, has been used as a treatment. Most commonly, white light is used at an intensity equaling that of a bright summer day—2,500 lux or higher.

Commercial light boxes are now available for treatment of SAD and other depressive disorders. The patient is typically instructed to remain a specified distance from the light box for a certain length of time, usually from 30 minutes to several hours. Phototherapy is given for a prescribed amount of time per day as ordered by a qualified provider, until a satisfactory antidepressive response is attained. The treatment can be repeated in the case of relapse following initial treatment. A portable light delivery device in the form of a light visor has also been developed to deliver an identical intensity of supplemental light for the same time period, allowing the patient to move around and perform normal activity during the treatment period.

Medical Criteria:

Not applicable.

Policy:

Phototherapy for the treatment of seasonal affective or other depressive disorders is covered. Phototherapy, for the purposes of this policy, is defined as the delivery of supplemental bright white light by a light box. Phototherapy lights require a physician’s order and must be supplied by a DME provider. Members are not eligible for reimbursement for phototherapy lights purchased elsewhere (e.g., internet, or local merchant).

Coverage:

Benefits vary between groups/contracts. Please refer to the appropriate member certificate/subscriber agreement/Rite Care contract for applicable durable medical equipment benefits/coverage.

Coding:

E0203 Therapeutic lightbox, minimum 10,000 lux, table top model
A4634 Replacement bulb for therapeutic light box, table top model

Also Known As:

Light box
Light Therapy Treatment, Seasonal Affective Disorder
Phototherapy Light for the Treatment of Seasonal Affective Disorder

Related Topics:

Not applicable

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employer agreement, and those documents will supersede the provisions of this medical policy. For information on member-specific benefits, call the provider call center. If you provide services to a member which are determined to not be medically necessary (or in some cases medically necessary services which are non-covered benefits), you may not charge the member for the services unless you have informed the member and they have agreed in writing in advance to continue with the treatment at their own expense. Please refer to your participation agreement(s) for the applicable provisions.

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