

Oximetry Testing – Supplier Involvement

In Change Request 3751, Transmittal 173, published on 8/16/05, CMS provided guidance on when a DME supplier may deliver test equipment used in overnight oximetry testing. Suppliers have asked a number of questions concerning this issue. This article repeats the main criteria from that document and provides additional information to address those questions.

Beneficiaries may self-administer home based overnight oximetry tests under the direction of a Medicare-enrolled Independent Diagnostic Testing Facility (IDTF). Further, a DME supplier or another shipping entity may deliver a pulse oximetry test unit and related technology used to collect and transmit test results to the IDTF to a beneficiary's home under the following circumstances:

1. The beneficiary's treating physician has contacted the IDTF to order an overnight pulse oximetry test before the test is performed.
2. The test is performed under the direction and/or instruction of a Medicare-approved IDTF. Because it is the beneficiary who self-administers this test, the IDTF must provide clear written instructions to the beneficiary on proper operation of the test equipment and must include access to the IDTF in order to address other concerns that may arise. The DME supplier may not create this written instruction, provide verbal instructions, answer questions from the beneficiary, apply or demonstrate the application of the testing equipment to the beneficiary, or otherwise participate in the conduct of the test.
3. The test unit is sealed and tamper-proof such that test results cannot be accessed by anyone other than the IDTF who is responsible for transmitting a test report to the treating physician. The DME supplier may use related technology to download test results from the testing unit and transmit those results to the IDTF. In no cases may the DME supplier access or manipulate the test results in any form.

The IDTF may send the test results only to the physician. It must not send them to the supplier.

It is important to note that supplier involvement in the delivery of oximetry devices to perform tests used to determine Medicare coverage for home oxygen is limited to sleep oximetry tests. Oximetry test results obtained through a similar process while the beneficiary is awake, either at rest or with exercise, may not be used for purposes of qualifying the beneficiary for home oxygen therapy.

Suppliers are also cautioned that sleep oximetry testing must be based on a request that is initiated by the treating physician. It is inappropriate for a supplier or IDTF to initiate a contact with the physician either directly or through the beneficiary to request, suggest, or otherwise seek an order for home oximetry testing.