Health and Social Care

NIPEARS

Northern Ireland Primary Eyecare Assessment and Referral Service

NI PEARS

NIPEARS provides community optometry care for new, acute eye conditions, with appointments available within 48hrs.

Patients should contact a NIPEARS provider to request an appointment- NIPEARS is not a walk-in service

ELIGIBLE FOR NIPEARS

- **New** eye conditions or visual problems in patients ≥ 5 years old.
- For patients self-presenting, **with symptoms lasting 14 days or less.** (14 DAYS)
- **Patients referred by GPs or Pharmacists,** with symptoms present for **no more than 6 weeks** and not resolving as expected. (6 WEEKS)

NOT ELIGIBLE FOR NIPEARS

- Patients whose presenting condition is already under the care of, or being actively managed by, the Hospital Eye Service.
- Patients previously assessed via NIPEARS for the same condition within the last 12 months (365)
- Patients with ongoing, previously diagnosed or previously assessed chronic eye conditions.
- Patients with symptoms related to eye surgery or an invasive eye procedure (e.g. intravitreal injection, laser) performed within the last **6 weeks**.
- **Emergency/sight threatening eye conditions**
  Immediate telephone referral to Eye Casualty is required (e.g. acute trauma, penetrating injury, chemical burn etc.)

IMPORTANT FOR EYE CASUALTY & EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

If a patient presents to the Emergency Department and assessment and/or management **has been commenced**, the patient should **remain under the care of the Emergency Department / Hospital Eye Service.** They should not be discharged to the community solely for NIPEARS for monitoring or review.

PLEASE CHECK ELIGIBILITY BEFORE REFERRING

NIPEARS funding applies only when the service criteria are met. If a patient is referred inappropriately and does not meet the NIPEARS criteria, the optometrist will not be able to claim under NIPEARS and **the patient may be charged a private fee.**

Based on NIPEARS GP Guidance (Dec 2024) and NIPEARS Service Specification Update (April 2025).