

VSI Sample Appeal Letter For Excimer Laser Therapy

Today's Date

Address for Claims Review Department of your Insurance Company; if you have a name of the person you are dealing with, include this.

Name of Insured:

Company Name if relevant:

Plan #:

Claim #:

Dear Name/or Claims Review Department:

I was denied coverage on **(date)** for the use of excimer laser therapy for vitiligo and am formally appealing that decision with this letter.

Vitiligo is a common autoimmune disease that causes the loss of pigment in the skin and results in white spots or patches. In autoimmune diseases, the immune system mistakenly attacks healthy body tissue, and, in vitiligo, the immune response is to melanocytes.

Emerging science is confirming the excimer laser as the most effective form of light therapy for vitiligo, especially vitiligo on the face. Additionally, the excimer laser may be more cost effective, as it yields results in less time with fewer treatments. According to the American Academy of Dermatology, about 70% of vitiligo patients improve with the use of excimer laser therapy, and treatment is most successful when used on a continual basis to maintain the benefits.

(See <http://www.aad.org/dermatology-a-to-z/diseases-and-treatments/u---w/vitiligo/diagnosis-treatment.>)

Vitiligo Support International (VSI) is the largest 501(c)3 patient advocacy organization for vitiligo, offering a comprehensive resource for vitiligo education, research and awareness for those whose lives have been affected by vitiligo and has the world's most renowned dermatologists who specialize in vitiligo treatment and research on its Medical Board. The group's website states that excimer laser is "a targeted NB machine typically using the 308 nm portion of the spectrum. Laser can be very effective for smaller areas of stable vitiligo. As it treats a small area, it is inefficient for larger areas or percentages. Results from laser treatments frequently occur more quickly than with other treatments... Any kind of light therapy has a suppressive effect on the immune system, so it can possibly stop new areas from forming as well."

(See [https://www.vitiligosupport.org/treatments_and_research/phototherapy.cfm.](https://www.vitiligosupport.org/treatments_and_research/phototherapy.cfm))

Light therapy, including excimer laser, is not experimental, is scientifically proven effective, and widely accepted as a standard treatment for vitiligo by the dermatology professional community. My physician, **(name and office address)**, has prescribed this medical therapy for treatment of vitiligo and is sending a letter documenting **(his/her)** recommendation for this treatment.

**(If your insurance letter of denial states that light therapy is denied
for cosmetic reasons, include the following:)**

Laser therapy is a medically necessary treatment:

- 1) Laser therapy is disease-modifying and not solely a cosmetic treatment. This treatment is covered for closely related autoimmune conditions such as psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. As mentioned above, laser therapy provides immune suppression necessary to stop and prevent further depigmentation.
- 2) Comparatively, wigs would normally be considered cosmetic but are covered by insurance for another closely related autoimmune disease - alopecia areata. The U.S. government recognizes the devastating mental and social consequences of dealing with hair loss and mandates that wigs be covered. Similar psychological consequences are evident with the depigmentation that occurs in vitiligo (Lindhorst *et al* 2009).
- 3) Breast reconstructive surgery is also cosmetic but is covered by most health insurance companies. We recognize the importance of how loss of a breast affects a person's psychological and social well-being; the loss of pigment similarly is devastating for vitiligo patients.

In addition to the two links from highly respected organizations cited above demonstrating the validity of laser therapy as a standard treatment for vitiligo, I have provided journal references below that further elucidate the acceptability and medical necessity in specific circumstances of laser therapy for treatment of vitiligo.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Your Address and Phone Number

CC: Your prescribing physician

**Your employer through which you have health insurance (HR director if you have one or
other personnel responsible for your health insurance coverage)**

State Insurance Commissioner

References:

Gawkrodger DJ, Ormerod AD, Shaw L et al. Guideline for the diagnosis and management of vitiligo. *Br J Dermatol* 2008; 159: 1051-76.

Linthorst Homan MW, Spuls PI, de Korte J et al. "The burden of vitiligo: patient characteristics associated with quality of life." *J Am Acad Dermatol* 2009; 61: 411-20.

Nicolaidou E, Antoniou C, Stratigos A et al. Narrowband ultraviolet B phototherapy and 308-nm excimer laser in the treatment of vitiligo: a review. *J Am Acad Dermatol* 2009; 60: 470-7.

Whitton ME, Ashcroft DM, Gonzalez U. Therapeutic interventions for vitiligo. *J Am Acad Dermatol* 2008; 59: 713-7.

Mouzakis JA, Liu S, Cohen G. Rapid Response of Facial Vitiligo to 308nm Excimer Laser and Topical Calcipotriene. *J Clin Aesthet Dermatol*. Jun 2011; 4(6): 41-44.

Alhawaish AK, Dietrich N, Onder M, Fritz K. Effectiveness of a 308-nm excimer laser in treatment of vitiligo: a review. *Lasers in Medical Science*. May 2013, Volume 28, Issue 3, pp 1035-1041.