



MASSACHUSETTS

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Medical Policy

Percutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation and Percutaneous Neuromodulation Therapy

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Policy Number: 172

BCBSA Reference Number: 7.01.29 (For Plan internal use only)

Related Policies

- Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation, #[003](#)
- Interferential Stimulation for Treatment of Pain, #[509](#)
- Temporomandibular Joint Dysfunction, #[035](#)
- Peripheral Subcutaneous Field Stimulation, #[513](#)
- Surgical and Non-surgical Treatment of Gynecomastia, #[661](#)
- Cranial Electrotherapy Stimulation and Auricular Electrostimulation, #[362](#)

Policy

Commercial Members: Managed Care (HMO and POS), PPO, and Indemnity

Percutaneous electrical neurostimulation or percutaneous neuromodulation therapy is considered [INVESTIGATIONAL](#).

Prior Authorization Information

Inpatient

- For services described in this policy, precertification/preauthorization **IS REQUIRED** for all products if the procedure is performed **inpatient**.

Outpatient

- For services described in this policy, see below for products where prior authorization **might be required** if the procedure is performed **outpatient**.

	Outpatient
Commercial Managed Care (HMO and POS)	This is not a covered service.
Commercial PPO and Indemnity	This is not a covered service.

CPT Codes / HCPCS Codes / ICD Codes

The following codes are included below for informational purposes. Inclusion or exclusion of a code does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement. Please refer to the member's

contract benefits in effect at the time of service to determine coverage or non-coverage as it applies to an individual member.

Providers should report all services using the most up-to-date industry-standard procedure, revenue, and diagnosis codes, including modifiers where applicable.

Note: Percutaneous Electronic Nerve Stimulator (PENS), when covered, are a DME benefit and are subject to any applicable DME co-insurance and benefit maximum

CPT Codes

There is no specific CPT code for this service.

Description

Chronic Pain

A variety of chronic musculoskeletal or neuropathic pain conditions, including low back pain, neck pain, diabetic neuropathy, chronic headache, and surface hyperalgesia, present a substantial burden to patients, adversely affecting function and quality of life. Certain racial and ethnic groups are at a higher risk of developing diabetes, which may also put them at higher risk of developing complications from diabetes, such as diabetic neuropathy. According to a 2018 to 2019 National Health Interview Survey and data from the Indian Health Service National Data Warehouse, American Indians and Alaska Natives had the highest reported rate of diagnosed diabetes at 14.5%.¹ This was followed by 12.1% of Black individuals, 11.8% of Hispanic individuals, 9.5% of Asian individuals, and 7.4% of White individuals having diagnosed diabetes in 2018 or 2019.

Treatment

These chronic pain conditions have typically failed other treatments, and percutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (PENS) and percutaneous neuromodulation therapy (PNT) have been evaluated as treatments to relieve unremitting pain.

Percutaneous electrical nerve stimulation is similar in concept to transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) (see evidence review 1.01.09) but differs in that needles are inserted either around or immediately adjacent to the nerves serving the painful area and are then stimulated. Percutaneous electrical nerve stimulation is generally reserved for patients who fail to get pain relief from TENS. Percutaneous electrical nerve stimulation is also distinguished from acupuncture with electrical stimulation. In electrical acupuncture, needles are also inserted just below the skin, but the placement of needles is based on specific theories regarding energy flow throughout the human body. In PENS, the location of stimulation is determined by proximity to the pain.

Percutaneous neuromodulation therapy is a variant of PENS in which fine filament electrode arrays are placed near the area causing pain. Some use the terms PENS and PNT interchangeably. It is proposed that PNT inhibits pain transmission by creating an electrical field that hyperpolarizes C fibers, thus preventing action potential propagation along the pain pathway.

Summary

Percutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (PENS) and percutaneous neuromodulation therapy (PNT) combine the features of electroacupuncture and transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS). Percutaneous electrical nerve stimulation is performed with needle electrodes while PNT uses very fine needle-like electrode arrays placed near the painful area to stimulate peripheral sensory nerves in the soft tissue.

Summary of Evidence

For individuals who have chronic pain conditions (eg, back, neck, neuropathy, headache, hyperalgesia) who receive PENS, the evidence includes primarily small controlled trials and 2 systematic reviews. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, functional outcomes, quality of life, and medication use. Two

systematic reviews have not revealed consistent benefit from PENS in musculoskeletal pain disorders. One review concluded that PENS could decrease pain intensity but not related disability, while the other found no significant differences between PENS and TENS in mitigation of pain. These conclusions are uncertain due to important methodological limitations in individual trials included in these reviews, such as high heterogeneity with regard to application methods. In the highest quality trial of PENS conducted to date in chronic low back pain, no difference in outcomes was found between the active (30 minutes of stimulation with 10 needles) and the sham (5 minutes of stimulation with 2 needles) treatments. Smaller trials, which have reported positive results, are limited by unclear blinding and short-term follow-up. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have chronic pain conditions (eg, knee osteoarthritis) who receive PNT, the evidence consists of a randomized controlled trial. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, functional outcomes, quality of life, and medication use. The single trial is limited by lack of investigator blinding, unclear participant blinding, and short-term follow-up. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Policy History

Date	Action
8/2022	Annual policy review. Description, summary, and references updated. Policy statement unchanged.
1/2021	Medicare information removed. See MP #132 Medicare Advantage Management for local coverage determination and national coverage determination reference.
8/2020	Annual policy review. Description, summary and references updated. Policy statements unchanged.
8/2019	Annual policy review. Description, summary and references updated. Policy statements unchanged.
5/2017	Annual policy review. Policy statement clarified. 5/1/2017
10/2013	New references from Annual policy review.
11/2011-4/2012	Medical policy ICD 10 remediation: Formatting, editing and coding updates. No changes to policy statements.
1/2012	Annual policy review. No changes to policy statements.
6/2011	Reviewed - Medical Policy Group - Orthopedics, Rehabilitation Medicine, and Rheumatology. No changes to policy statements.
1/2011	Reviewed - Medical Policy Group - Neurology and Neurosurgery. No changes to policy statements.
7/2010	Reviewed - Medical Policy Group - Orthopedics, Rehabilitation Medicine, and Rheumatology. No changes to policy statements.
5/2010	Annual policy review. No changes to policy statements.
3/2010	New medical policy describing covered and non-covered indication. Effective 3/1/2010.

Information Pertaining to All Blue Cross Blue Shield Medical Policies

Click on any of the following terms to access the relevant information:

- [Medical Policy Terms of Use](#)
- [Managed Care Guidelines](#)
- [Indemnity/PPO Guidelines](#)
- [Clinical Exception Process](#)
- [Medical Technology Assessment Guidelines](#)

References

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