



MASSACHUSETTS

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## Medical Policy

### Complementary Medicine

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#### Policy Number: 178

BCBSA Reference Number: N/A

NCD/LCD: N/A

#### Related Policies

None

#### Policy

### Commercial Members: Managed Care (HMO and POS), PPO, and Indemnity Medicare HMO Blue<sup>SM</sup> and Medicare PPO Blue<sup>SM</sup> Members

Complimentary Medicine is considered **NOT MEDICALLY NECESSARY** and includes, but is not limited to, the following services:

1. Acupressure
2. Antioxidant therapy and nutritional supplements (except vitamin B12 for vitamin B12 deficient patients)
3. Aromatherapy
4. Ayurvedic Medicine
5. Bioelectromagnetic therapy
6. Colon Hydrotherapy
7. Cranial manipulation (chiropractic intervention)
8. Cupping Therapy (including but not limited to bloodletting cupping)
9. Functional Medicine
10. Gua Sha Therapy
11. Herbal Therapy
12. Holistic Medicine
13. Homeopathy
14. Hypnotherapy
15. Infratonic sound therapy (i.e., Infratonic QGM Machine, Infratonic Qi-Gong Machine)
16. Iridology
17. Naturopathic Medicine
18. On-site massage (in the home or work setting)
19. Oxidative Therapy
20. Polarity Therapy
21. Qi Gong
22. Reflexology
23. Reiki

- 24. Rolwing
- 25. Sacro-Occipital Technique (chiropractic intervention).

## Prior Authorization Information

### Inpatient

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

### Outpatient

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

	Outpatient
<b>Commercial Managed Care (HMO and POS)</b>	This is <b>not</b> a covered service.
<b>Commercial PPO and Indemnity</b>	This is <b>not</b> a covered service.
<b>Medicare HMO Blue<sup>SM</sup></b>	This is <b>not</b> a covered service.
<b>Medicare PPO Blue<sup>SM</sup></b>	This is <b>not</b> a covered service.

## CPT Codes / HCPCS Codes / ICD Codes

*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.*

*The following codes are included below for informational purposes only; this is not an all-inclusive list.*

**According to the policy statement above, the following CPT and HCPCS codes are considered not medically necessary for Commercial Members: Managed Care (HMO and POS), PPO, Indemnity, Medicare HMO Blue and Medicare PPO Blue:**

### CPT Codes

CPT codes:	Code Description
90880	Hypnotherapy

### HCPCS Codes

HCPCS codes:	Code Description
S8930	Electrical stimulation of auricular acupuncture points; each 15 minutes of personal one-on-one contact with patient

## Description

**Acupressure:** Physical pressure is used at certain trigger points on the body and the pressure may be applied by elbow, by hand, or by using various devices. It is based on the concept of life energy flowing through the body. Acupressure might help with nausea, stomach aches, vomiting, tension headaches and lower back pain. However, there is no reliable evidence on the effectiveness of acupressure.

**Aromatherapy:** The use of essential oils which can be used for massage or inhalation or water immersion or topical application. It is the use of aroma materials, essential oils and aromatics to help improve physical and psychological health.

**Ayurveda:** These therapies typically include meditation, laxatives, special diets, enemas, medicines, yoga, massage and medical oils. The medicines are often composed of minerals, metal substances and herbal compounds. There is no good evidence that Ayurveda is effective for treating any disease.

**Bioelectromagnetic Therapy:** The application of electromagnetic radiation for the treatment of various conditions. The study of the interaction between electromagnetic fields produced by living cells, tissues or organisms and also the effects of electromagnetic fields from mobile phones.

**Colon Hydrotherapy:** Also referred to as colon therapy or colon cleansing. The goal of this treatment to remove unspecified toxins from the colon and gastrointestinal tract by eliminating accumulated feces.

**Cranial manipulation (chiropractic intervention):** Is the application of gentle pressure and manipulation of the joints of the skull. It is performed by hand with no tools. Its goal is to lessen pain including jaw pain, TMJ/TMD, swallowing difficulty, chewing difficulty, clenching and bruxism, vertigo, headaches including migraines, sleep apnea, chronic fatigue, hormone imbalances, insomnia, tinnitus, vision problems, coordination and developmental disorders, vertigo, chronic sinus issues, post concussive disorders and more.

**Cupping Therapy (bloodletting cupping):** Involves the use of suction cups (often heated) to help with blood flow, reduce inflammation, reduce pain, and to help with overall well-being and relaxation. Bloodletting: the withdrawal of blood from a patient with the goal of helping to prevent or cure disease or illness. Bloodletting cupping is the use of suction cups to help with blood flow, and its aim is to help reduce pain and inflammation and assist with blood flow, and to help with overall patient well-being. Bloodletting is done with a small needle prick, and cupping after bloodletting is designed to help with the overall therapeutic effect.

**Functional Medicine:** Aims to address the root cause of chronic underlying conditions or injuries that may be resulting from another illness. A variety of tests can be conducted to look for imbalances in the body that may be contributing or resulting from one specific condition.

**Gua Sha Therapy:** Involves the scraping of the skin with a smooth edge tool to improve circulation and reduce tension, inflammation and pain. Gua sha is typically administered by an acupuncturist or aesthetician.

**Herbal Medicine:** Includes the use of medicinal plants, fungal and bee products, as well as minerals, shells and certain animal parts. The dosage and purity standards are lacking. There is insufficient evidence about its safety and efficacy.

**Holistic Medicine:** Uses both conventional and alternative therapies to prevent and treat diseases. It tries to address the whole person, mind and body and spirit. Its goal is overall optimal health. It includes patient education and participation in the healing process. Holistic medicine looks at the nutritional, environmental, emotional, nutritional, physical, spiritual and lifestyle.

**Homeopathy:** A natural healing system based on the belief that the body can cure itself. It is also used to help relieve symptoms and restore vitality. It uses natural remedies, usually plants and/or minerals. It is used for helping with physical and mental health issues ranging from sore throats and colds to arthritis and depression and asthma.

**Hypnotherapy:** Positive suggestions and guided imagery are used under hypnosis to help patients with various issues and concerns. Hypnosis is typically performed by a therapist using verbal repetition and mental images.

**Infrasonic Therapy:** A form of massage therapy using sound waves. It is claimed that infusing damaged or abnormal tissue with soundwaves may promote healing, reduce inflammation and ease pain.

**Iridology:** An alternative medicine that examines the characteristics of the iris of the eye. The concept is that the iris can be read like a map that shows the current state of health as well as point to potential health challenges.

**Naturopathic Medicine:** is alternative medicine using practices that are non-invasive or natural and promote healing. The concept is that many diseases can be treated or prevented without drugs or medical testing or surgery. Instead, diet, exercise and massage are used.

**Oxidative Therapy:** Goes by many names and it boils down to adding more oxygen to the blood and/or various tissues in various ways. Many benefits for the treatment of disease or for prevention are claimed. There are many

different treatment methods which include forcing additional oxygen into the lungs under pressure, mixing the blood with ozone gas, injection of ozone under the skin to treat scarring, insufflation into the nose or ear or bladder, or vagina or rectum.

**Polarity Therapy:** Based on the concept of achieving or restoring a balanced distribution of the body's energy and maintaining proper energy flow throughout the body. Exercise, manipulation and diet are used. The theory is that all energy in the human body is based on electromagnetic force. Improperly dissipated energy leads to disease.

**Qigong:** is practiced throughout China and worldwide for cultivating and finding self-healing balance. It is a system of movement, deep breathing, and meditation as well as coordinated body posture. It is practiced as preventive medicine, exercise; slow and rhythmic. Its goals include archiving a calm and meditative state of mind.

**Reflexology:** is also known as zone therapy. It involves applying pressure to specific parts of the feet and hands and it is generally done without lotion or oil. It is performed using hand massage, thumb or finger/s. The theory is that applying pressure or massaging certain places on the feet or hands will bring about improvements or changes to various parts of the body. The theory is that various reflex areas or zones on and feet correspond to different parts of the body. The claim is that reflexology brings about physical improvements and reduced stress levels thus helps improve overall health.

**Reiki:** is treatment that seeks to promote physical and emotional healing by helping to balance the universal energy or life energy or fields of energy. The goal is to allow healing energy to freely flow throughout the body. The theory is that the Reiki practitioner can transfer healing energy to the patient. Reiki is more about healing energy rather than massage. Reiki is sometimes known as acupuncture without needles.

**Rolfing:** is also called Rolf therapy or integration, and it was developed by Ida Rolf. It generally consists of ten physical manipulation sessions. This is sometimes referred to as the "recipe." Those who practice this therapy do both superficial and deep manual therapy. The process is sometimes painful. It is based on Rolf's theories about the benefits of aligning the body's "energy field" with the gravitational field of the earth.

**Sacro-Occipital Technique (chiropractic intervention):** a chiropractic technique to help reduce or eliminate pain in the craniospinal, TMJ, head, neck, back and pelvis, foot, ankle, knee, and hip, wrist, elbow and shoulder, and in some cases help with organ function. With the Sacro-Occipital technique, wedges or "blocks" are positioned under the pelvis. The patient's body weight and a chiropractor's gentle pressure helps correct misalignments with the goal of helping to restore better function to the nervous system.

## Summary

Alternative medicine involves the use of various therapies and products and health care practices, most of which have not been proven thoroughly tested or proven effective. Some alternative medicine might even use some proven traditional practices but becomes alternative used for purposes outside their original scientifically proven use.

Complementary medicine or integrative medicine is a combination of alternative treatments or therapies used along with generally accepted and scientifically proven and established medicine. These may hold promise but are yet unproven.

The shared claim of all of alternative medicine is a claim to help or cure that is often not based on the scientific method and thorough testing. Much of it relies on pseudoscience and therefore remains outside of standard medical science.

Most alternative medicine lacks proven scientific validation of its effectiveness. Whatever research and testing that has been done is insufficient, methodologically flawed and not of high quality. There may be some examples where alternative medicine or therapies might help, however the scientific validation and proof are lacking.

## Policy History

Date	Action
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12/2024	Policy clarified. Gua Sha therapy added to not medically necessary and investigational services. 12/1/2024.
9/2024	Annual policy review. Investigational indications and descriptions added: Functional medicine; cranial manipulation; sacro-occipital. Cupping therapy clarified to specify bloodletting cupping. Effective 9/1/2024.
8/2022	Annual policy review. Policy statements unchanged.
11/2021	Policy clarified to add bioelectromagnetic therapy as an investigational service. Policy statement and investigational indications unchanged. Policy updated to include description, summary and references from literature search through October 2021.
1/2020	Investigational statement on acupuncture was removed. Clarified coding information. Effective 1/1/2020.
3/2018	BCBSMA Medical Policy Group – Allergy, ENT and Otolaryngology review. No changes to policy statements.
4/2015	Massage therapy statement removed; Coverage for massage therapy is determined by the subscriber certificate. Non-coverage of acupuncture clarified. Effective 4/1/2015.

## 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](#)

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#### Colon Hydrotherapy

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