



Medical Policy

Nerve Graft with Radical Prostatectomy

Table of Contents

- [Policy: Commercial](#)
- [Policy: Medicare](#)
- [Authorization Information](#)
- [Coding Information](#)
- [Description](#)
- [Policy History](#)
- [Information Pertaining to All Policies](#)
- [References](#)

Policy Number: 590

BCBSA Reference Number: 7.01.81 (For Plan internal use only)
 NCD/LCD: N/A

Related Policies

None

Policy

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

Unilateral or bilateral nerve graft is considered [INVESTIGATIONAL](#) in individuals who have had undergone resection of one or both neurovascular bundles as part of a radical prostatectomy.

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. |
| Medicare HMO Blue SM | This is not a covered service. |
| Medicare PPO Blue SM | This is not 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.

CPT Codes

There is no specific CPT code for this service.

Description

Erectile Dysfunction

Erectile dysfunction is a common problem after radical prostatectomy. In particular, spontaneous erections are usually absent in men whose prostate cancer required bilateral resection of the neurovascular bundles as part of the radical prostatectomy procedure.

Treatment

A variety of noninvasive treatments are available, including vacuum constriction devices and intracavernosal injection therapy. However, spontaneous erectile activity is preferred by individuals. Studies have reported results from bilateral and unilateral nerve grafts, the latter involving resection of 1 neurovascular bundle.

There has been interest in sural nerve grafting to replace cavernous nerves resection during prostatectomy. The sural nerve is considered expendable and has been extensively used in other nerve grafting procedures, such as brachial plexus and peripheral nerve injuries. As applied to prostatectomy, a portion of the sural nerve is harvested from 1 leg and then anastomosed to the divided ends of the cavernous nerve. Reports also indicate the use of other nerves (eg, genitofemoral nerve) for grafting.

Summary

Nerve grafting at the time of radical prostatectomy, most commonly using the sural nerve, has been proposed to reduce the risk of postoperative erectile dysfunction.

Summary of Evidence

For individuals who have radical prostatectomy with resection of neurovascular bundles who receive nerve grafting, the evidence includes a randomized controlled trial (RCT), cohort studies, and case series. Relevant outcomes are functional outcomes, quality of life, and treatment-related morbidity. The RCT did not find that unilateral nerve grafting was associated with a statistically significant improvement in potency rates at 2 years post-surgery. Cohort studies also did not result in better outcomes with nerve grafting. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Policy History

| Date | Action |
|--------|---|
| 6/2022 | Annual policy review. NCCN reference updated. The word "patients" was replaced with "individuals" in the policy statement; intent unchanged. |
| 5/2021 | Annual policy review. Description, summary, and references updated. Policy statements unchanged. |
| 6/2020 | Annual policy review. Description, summary, and references updated. Policy statements unchanged. |
| 5/2019 | Annual policy review. Description, summary, and references updated. Policy statements unchanged. |
| 5/2018 | Annual policy review. Description, summary, and references updated. Policy statements unchanged. |
| 5/2017 | Annual policy review. New references added. |
| 6/2016 | Annual policy review. Policy statement unchanged; "undergone" changed to "had" in the statement. Title changed to "Nerve Graft with Radical Prostatectomy." |
| 2/2015 | Annual policy review. New references added. |
| 3/2014 | Annual policy review. New references added. |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| 11/2011-4/2012 | Medical policy ICD 10 remediation: Formatting, editing and coding updates. No changes to policy statements. |
| 9/2011 | Reviewed - Medical Policy Group – Urology, Obstetrics and Gynecology. No changes to policy statements. |
| 3/21/2011 | New policy effective 3/21/2011 describing ongoing non-coverage. |

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

1. National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN). NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology: Prostate Cancer. Version 3.2022. https://www.nccn.org/professionals/physician_gls/pdf/prostate.pdf. Accessed February 24, 2022.
2. Davis JW, Chang DW, Chevray P, et al. Randomized phase II trial evaluation of erectile function after attempted unilateral cavernous nerve-sparing retropubic radical prostatectomy with versus without unilateral sural nerve grafting for clinically localized prostate cancer. *Eur Urol*. May 2009; 55(5): 1135-43. PMID 18783876
3. Kung TA, Waljee JF, Curtin CM, et al. Interpositional Nerve Grafting of the Prostatic Plexus after Radical Prostatectomy. *Plast Reconstr Surg Glob Open*. Jul 2015; 3(7): e452. PMID 26301141
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5. Rabbani F, Ramasamy R, Patel MI, et al. Predictors of recovery of erectile function after unilateral cavernous nerve graft reconstruction at radical retropubic prostatectomy. *J Sex Med*. Jan 2010; 7(1 Pt 1): 166-81. PMID 19686422
6. Siddiqui KM, Billia M, Mazzola CR, et al. Three-year outcomes of recovery of erectile function after open radical prostatectomy with sural nerve grafting. *J Sex Med*. Aug 2014; 11(8): 2119-24. PMID 24903070
7. Souza Trindade JC, Viterbo F, Petean Trindade A, et al. Long-term follow-up of treatment of erectile dysfunction after radical prostatectomy using nerve grafts and end-to-side somatic-autonomic neurorraphy: a new technique. *BJU Int*. Jun 2017; 119(6): 948-954. PMID 28093890