In the appendicular skeleton, electrical stimulation with either implantable electrodes or noninvasive surface stimulators has been investigated to facilitate the healing of fresh fractures, stress fractures, delayed union, nonunion, congenital pseudoarthroses, and arthrodesis.

**Noninvasive Electrical Bone Growth Stimulation**

For individuals who have fracture nonunion who receive noninvasive electrical bone growth stimulation, the evidence includes randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and systematic reviews of RCTs. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, change in disease status, and functional outcomes. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved noninvasive electrical bone growth stimulation for fracture non-unions and congenital pseudoarthroses in the appendicular skeleton, based largely on studies with patients serving as their own controls. There is also evidence from 2 small sham-controlled randomized trials that noninvasive electrical stimulators improve fracture healing for patients with fracture nonunion. However, there are few nonsurgical options in this population, and the pre-post studies of patients with non-healing fractures support the efficacy of the treatment. The evidence is sufficient to determine that the technology results in a meaningful improvement in the net health outcome. For individuals who have delayed fracture union, fresh or stress fracture(s), or who have had surgery of the appendicular skeleton who receive noninvasive electrical bone growth stimulation, the evidence includes RCTs and systematic reviews of RCTs. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, change in disease status, and functional outcomes. A meta-analysis of 5 RCTs found no statistically significant benefit of electrical bone growth stimulation for fresh fractures. RCTs on delayed union of the other types of fractures were limited by small sample sizes and did not show significant differences in outcomes between study groups. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.
For individuals who have fracture, pseudoarthroses, or who have had surgery of the appendicular skeleton who receive implantable and semi-invasive electrical bone growth stimulation, the evidence includes a small number of case series. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, change in disease status, and functional outcomes. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

**Policy**

**Coding Information**
Click the links below for attachments, coding tables & instructions.
Attachment I - CPT® Coding Table
Attachment II - ICD-10-CM Coding Table

**When a service may be considered medically necessary**

Noninvasive electrical bone growth stimulation may be considered medically necessary as treatment of fracture non-unions or congenital pseudoarthroses in the appendicular skeleton (the appendicular skeleton includes the bones of the shoulder girdle, upper extremities, pelvis, and lower extremities). The diagnosis of fracture nonunion must meet ALL of the following criteria:

- At least 3 months have passed since the date of fracture;
- Serial radiographs have confirmed that no progressive signs of healing have occurred;
- The fracture gap is 1 cm or less; and
- The patient can be adequately immobilized; and
- Is of an age likely to comply with non-weight bearing for fractures of the pelvis and lower extremities.

**When a service is considered investigational**

Investigational applications of electrical bone growth stimulation include, but are not limited to, immediate postsurgical treatment after appendicular skeletal surgery, stress fractures, or for the treatment of fresh fractures, delayed union, arthrodesis or failed arthrodesis.

Implantable and semi-invasive electrical bone growth stimulators are considered investigational.

**Definitions**

**Fresh Fracture**
A fracture is most commonly defined as “fresh” for 7 days after the fracture occurs. Most fresh closed fractures heal without complications with the use of standard fracture care (ie, closed reduction and cast immobilization).

**Delayed Union**
Delayed union is defined as a decelerating healing process as determined by serial x-rays,
together with a lack of clinical and radiologic evidence of union, bony continuity, or bone reaction at the fracture site for no less than 3 months from the index injury or the most recent intervention. In contrast, nonunion serial radiographs (described next) show no evidence of healing. When lumped together, delayed union and nonunion are sometimes referred to as “un-united fractures.”

Fractured Nonunion
No consensus on the definition of fracture nonunion currently exists. One proposed definition is failure of progression of fracture healing for at least 3 consecutive months (and at least 6 months following the fracture) accompanied by clinical symptoms of delayed/nonunion (pain, difficulty weight bearing) (Bhandari et al, 2012).

The original U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) labeling of fracture non-unions defined non-unions as fractures not showing progressive healing after at least 9 months from the original injury. The labeling states: “A nonunion is considered to be established when a minimum of 9 months has elapsed since injury and the fracture site shows no visibly progressive signs of healing for minimum of 3 months.” This timeframe is not based on physiologic principles but was included as part of the research design for FDA approval as a means of ensuring homogeneous populations of patients, many of whom were serving as their own controls. Others have contended that 9 months represents an arbitrary cutoff point that does not reflect the complicated variables present in fractures, (i.e., degree of soft tissue damage, alignment of the bone fragments, vascularity, and quality of the underlying bone stock). Some fractures may show no signs of healing, based on serial radiographs as early as 3 months, while a fracture nonunion may not be diagnosed in others until well after 9 months. The current policy of requiring a 3-month timeframe for lack of progression of healing is consistent with the definition of nonunion as described in the clinical literature.

Reference Resources


Related Policies

Electrical Stimulation of the Spine as an Adjunct to Spinal Fusion procedures

Document Precedence

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont (BCBSVT) Medical Policies are developed to provide clinical guidance and are based on research of current medical literature and review of common medical practices in the treatment and diagnosis of disease. The applicable group/individual contract and member certificate language, or employer’s benefit plan if an ASO group, determines benefits that are in effect at the time of service. Since medical practices and knowledge are constantly evolving, BCBSVT reserves the right to review and revise its medical policies periodically. To the extent that there may be any conflict between medical policy and contract/employer benefit plan language, the member’s contract/employer benefit plan language takes precedence.

Audit Information

BCBSVT reserves the right to conduct audits on any provider and/or facility to ensure compliance with the guidelines stated in the medical policy. If an audit identifies instances of non-compliance with this medical policy, BCBSVT reserves the right to recoup all non-compliant payments.
Benefit Determination Guidance

Prior approval is required for services outlined in this policy. Benefits are subject to all terms, limitations and conditions of the subscriber contract.

NEHP/ABNE members may have different benefits for services listed in this policy. To confirm benefits, please contact the customer service department at the member’s health plan.

Federal Employee Program (FEP): Members may have different benefits that apply. For further information please contact FEP customer service or refer to the FEP Service Benefit Plan Brochure. It is important to verify the member’s benefits prior to providing the service to determine if benefits are available or if there is a specific exclusion in the member’s benefit.

Coverage varies according to the member’s group or individual contract. Not all groups are required to follow the Vermont legislative mandates. Member Contract language takes precedence over medical policy when there is a conflict.

If the member receives benefits through an Administrative Services Only (ASO) group, benefits may vary or not apply. To verify benefit information, please refer to the member’s employer benefit plan documents or contact the customer service department. Language in the employer benefit plan documents takes precedence over medical policy when there is a conflict.

Policy Implementation/Update Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04/2017</td>
<td>Adopted BCBSA policy MPRM 7.01.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/2017</td>
<td>Updated description, updated regulatory status, updated references, added Related Policy section, added ICD-10 Q74.0 to the coding table. Policy Statement remains unchanged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/2019</td>
<td>Aligned with BCBSA MPRM 7.01.07 updated references, policy statements remain unchanged.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eligible providers

Qualified healthcare professionals practicing within the scope of their license(s).

Approved by BCBSVT Medical Directors

Joshua Plavin, MD, MPH, MBA
Chief Medical Officer

Kate McIntosh, MD, FAAP
Senior Medical Director
### Attachment I
CPT® Coding Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Policy Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPT®</td>
<td>20974</td>
<td>Electrical stimulation to aid bone healing; noninvasive (non-operative)</td>
<td>Prior Approval is required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCPCS</td>
<td>E0747</td>
<td>Osteogenesis stimulator, electrical, noninvasive, other than spinal applications</td>
<td>Prior Approval is required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following codes will be considered as medically necessary when applicable criteria have been met.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Policy Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPT®</td>
<td>20975</td>
<td>Electrical stimulation to aid bone healing; invasive (operative)</td>
<td>Investigational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCPCS</td>
<td>E0749</td>
<td>Osteogenesis stimulator, electrical, surgically implanted</td>
<td>Investigational</td>
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</table>

The following codes will be denied as Not Medically Necessary, Non-Covered, Contract Exclusions or Investigational

### Attachment II
ICD-10-CM Code Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICD-10 code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q74.0</td>
<td>Other congenital malformations of upper limb(s), including shoulder girdle(includes congenital pseudoarthrosis of clavicle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S32.2xxK-S32.9xxK</td>
<td>Fracture of coccyx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S42.00xK-S42.92xK</td>
<td>Fracture of shoulder and upper arm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S49.00xK-S49.199K</td>
<td>Other and unspecified injuries of shoulder and upper arm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S52.00xK-S52.92xN</td>
<td>Fracture of forearm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICD-10 code</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S59.00xK- S59.299K</td>
<td>Other and unspecified injuries of elbow and forearm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S62.00xK-S62.92xK-</td>
<td>Fracture at wrist and hand level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S72.00xK-S72.92xN</td>
<td>Fracture of femur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S79.00xK-S79.199K</td>
<td>Other and unspecified injuries of hip and thigh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S82.00xK-S82.92xN</td>
<td>Fracture of lower leg, including ankle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S89.00xK-S89.399K</td>
<td>Other and unspecified injuries of lower leg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S92.00xK-S92.919K</td>
<td>Fracture of foot and toe, except ankle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fracture nonunion codes for the appendicular skeleton - 7th digit
“K” is subsequent encounter for nonunion (in forearm, femur, lower leg & ankle
fractures 7th digits “M” and “N” are also nonunion for certain types of open
fractures - in fractures of the shoulder, humerus, wrist, hand and foot there isn’t
separation of open vs. closed non-unions).