OVERVIEW
Audiology is a specialty focusing on hearing impairment/loss through identification and evaluation, and the rehabilitation of persons with hearing impairment/loss. Audiological services are normally provided by a licensed audiologist who performs audiometric/diagnostic tests that evaluate both sensorineural and conductive hearing impairment/losses.

MEDICAL CRITERIA
Not applicable

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION
Not applicable

POLICY STATEMENT
BlueCHiP for Medicare and Commercial Products
Evaluation of hearing impairment tests are considered medically necessary in illnesses or injuries including, but not limited to, the following: Hearing loss; Otitis media; Meniere’s disease; Labyrinthitis; Vertigo (dizziness); Tinnitus; Cochlear otosclerosis; Neoplasms of the auditory or central nervous system; Congenital anomalies; Surgery involving the auditory and/or central nervous system, e.g., skull-based tumors such as acoustic neuroma and meningioma; Facial nerve paralysis (Bell’s palsy); Bacterial meningitis; Exposure to intense noise; Ototoxic drugs; Fractures of the temporal bone or trauma affecting the central auditory pathways.

Audiology studies performed by independently licensed audiologists are covered diagnostic services when they are ordered by a physician or a mid-level practitioner.

COVERAGE
Benefits may vary between groups/contracts. Please refer to the appropriate Benefit Booklet, Evidence of Coverage, or Subscriber Agreement for applicable benefits for Hearing Services.

BACKGROUND
Hearing impairment or hearing loss is a reduction in the ability to perceive sound. The loss may range from slight to complete deafness caused by sensorineural and/or conductive hearing losses.

Audiology is a specialty focusing on hearing impairment or hearing loss through identification and evaluation, and the rehabilitation of persons with hearing impairment or hearing loss. Audiological services are normally provided by a licensed audiologist who performs audiometric/diagnostic tests that evaluate both sensorineural and conductive hearing impairment/losses.

The various audiometric tests can be subdivided into standard batteries that are typically used as part of the initial work-up of patients presenting with hearing impairment, as well as specialized tests that are typically used in specific clinical situations. The standard batteries vary according to whether the patient is an adult, child, or infant. Tests identified as specialized would not be part of the initial hearing impairment work-up, but may be considered medically necessary when initial diagnostic tests are inconclusive or not appropriate to the specific condition.
The following tests identify standard and specialized audiology tests for adults, children, and infants:

**Standard Battery of Tests**

**For Adults and Children:**
1. Pure-tone audiometry, air and bone conduction
2. Speech audiometry
3. Word recognition tests
4. Acoustic reflex test and acoustic reflex decay
5. Tympanometry (impedance testing)

**For Children Only:**
1. Select picture audiometry
2. Conditioning play audiometry

**For Infants Only:**
1. Auditory evoked potential, aka Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR)
2. Visual reinforcement audiometry (VRA)
3. Evoked otoacoustic emissions (OAE)
4. Acoustic reflex test

**Specialized Tests for Adults and Children:**
1. Auditory Evoked Potential
2. Electrocochleography (ECochG)
3. Tone decay test
4. Stenger test, pure tone or speech
5. Sensorineural acuity level (SAL) test
6. Evoked otoacoustic emissions

The following audiometric tests are considered obsolete and thus are **not** covered for BlueCHiP for Medicare and not medically necessary for Commercial products:

- Lombard test (replaced by the Stenger test and auditory evoked potential);
- Alternate binaural loudness balance test;
- Short increment sensitivity test (replaced by pure tone audiometry, auditory evoked potential);
- Bekesy audiometry.

The following audiometric tests are not covered for BlueCHiP for Medicare and not medically necessary for Commercial products as there is no scientific literature to support efficacy:

- Staggered spondaic word test;
- Synthetic sentence identification test.

**CODING**

**BlueCHiP for Medicare and Commercial Products**

The following tests are covered:

Hearing Tests (routine):

- 92551 Screening test, pure tone, air only
- 92552 Pure tone audiometry (threshold); air only
- 92557 Comprehensive audiometry threshold evaluation and speech recognition (92553 and 92556 combined)
V5008  Hearing screening

Hearing Tests:
92550  Tymanometry and reflex threshold measurements
92553  Pure tone audiometry (threshold); air and bone
92555  Speech audiometry threshold;
92556  Speech audiometry threshold; with speech recognition
92563  Tone decay test
92565  Stenger test, pure tone
92567  Tymanometry (impedance testing)
92568  Acoustic reflex testing; threshold
92570  Acoustic immittance testing, includes tymanometry (impedance testing), acoustic reflex
       threshold testing, and acoustic reflex decay testing
92571  Filtered speech test
92575  Sensorineural acuity level test
92577  Stenger test, speech
92579  Visual reinforcement audiometry (VRA)
92582  Conditioning play audiometry
92583  Select picture audiometry
92584  Electrocochleography
92585  Auditory evoked potentials for evoked response audiometry and/or testing of the central
       nervous system; comprehensive
92586  Auditory evoked potentials for evoked response audiometry and/or testing of the central
       nervous system; limited
92587  Distortion product evoked otoacoustic emissions; limited evaluation (to confirm the presence
       or absence of hearing disorder, 3-6 frequencies) or transient evoked otoacoustic emissions,
       with interpretation and report
92588  Distortion product evoked otoacoustic emissions; comprehensive diagnostic evaluation
       (quantitative analysis of outer hair cell function by cochlear mapping, minimum of 12
       frequencies), with interpretation and report

The following codes are not covered for BlueCHiP for Medicare and not medically necessary for Commercial
products:
92559  Audiometric testing of groups
92560  Bekesy audiometry; screening
92561  Bekesy audiometry; diagnostic
92562  Loudness balance test, alternate binaural or monaural
92564  Short increment sensitivity index (SISI)
92572  Staggered spondaic word test
92576  Synthetic sentence identification test

RELATED POLICIES
Hearing Aid Mandate
Cochlear Implants
Preventive Services for Commercial Members

PUBLISHED
Provider Update, May 2020
Provider Update, April 2019
Provider Update, May 2017
Provider Update, June 2016
Provider Update, August 2015
REFERENCES