

Medical Coverage Policy | Dry Hydrotherapy for Chronic Pain Conditions



EFFECTIVE DATE: 11|01|2022

POLICY LAST REVIEWED: 01|07|2026

OVERVIEW

Dry hydrotherapy, also known as hydromassage or aquamassage, is a massage treatment modality that circulates heated, pressurized water in a self-contained device such as a bed or chair. The individual remains clothed and dry as they sit or lie on top of a waterproof barrier containing rotating and pulsating interior jets. Purported benefits of dry hydrotherapy include alleviation of pain, increased blood circulation, improved range of motion, and decreased need for other interventions.

MEDICAL CRITERIA

Not applicable

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION

Not applicable

POLICY STATEMENT

Medicare Advantage Plans

The use of dry hydrotherapy massagers for the treatment of chronic pain conditions is not covered as the evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

Commercial Products

The use of dry hydrotherapy massagers for the treatment of chronic pain conditions is not medically necessary as the evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

COVERAGE

Benefits may vary between groups/contracts. Please refer to the Evidence of Coverage or Subscriber Agreement for applicable not medically necessary/not covered benefits/coverage.

BACKGROUND

Dry hydrotherapy, also known as hydromassage or aquamassage, is a massage treatment modality that circulates streams of heated, pressurized water in a self-contained device such as a bed or chair. The individual remains clothed and dry as they sit or lie on top of a waterproof barrier containing rotating and pulsating interior jets. Purported benefits of dry hydrotherapy include alleviation of pain, increased blood circulation, improved range of motion, deep relaxation, and reduction of stress and anxiety. Use of dry hydrotherapy has also been suggested to reduce the need for other interventions, by combining the effects of traditional wet hydrotherapy, massage therapy, acupressure, heat therapy, soft tissue manipulation, and trigger point therapy without the need for additional health staff.

Specific physiological effects claimed on the Sidmar manufacturer site for its hydromassage tables include purported physiological effects stemming from application of radiant heat and massage. Purported physiologic effects of radiant heat include analgesic, antispasmodic, decongestive, sedative, and vasodilatory properties, leading to reduced pain, increased relaxation, enhanced capillary blood flow, decreased spasticity, tenderness, and spasm, and increased rates of healing. Purported benefits of massage include increased local blood supply, increased lymphatic drainage and reduction of swelling, muscle relaxation, prevention of adhesions and fibrosis, decreased tendency toward muscle atrophy, and pain reduction and increased ease of mobility.

Regulatory Status

Dry hydrotherapy devices are classified by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as class I therapeutic massagers, which are defined as electrically powered devices intended for medical purposes, such as to relieve minor muscle aches and pains. Class I devices are exempt from 510(k) requirements and do not require submission of clinical data regarding efficacy but only notification of FDA prior to marketing.

Dry hydrotherapy does not involve water immersion and should not be confused with immersion hydromassage baths or powered sitz baths.

Examples of currently marketed dry hydrotherapy devices include but may not be limited to HydroMassage branded (previously AquaMED) beds and loungers (WellnessSpace Brands), Pro S10 or ComfortWave S10 branded hydromassage tables (Sidmar Manufacturing Inc.), and SolaJet® Dry-Hydrotherapy Systems.

For individuals with chronic pain conditions (eg, musculoskeletal, neuropathic, and mixed pain conditions) who receive dry hydrotherapy, there are no published, peer-reviewed studies. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, functional outcomes, quality of life, medication use, and resource utilization. A health technology assessment released in 1998 for the AquaMED device also failed to identify published research to support claims that dry hydrotherapy can take the place of multiple modalities or that it provides any durable health benefits. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

CODING

Medicare Advantage Plans and Commercial Products

There is not a specific code(s) for this service. Claims must be filed with the following unlisted code(s):
97039 Unlisted modality (specify type and time if constant attendance)

RELATED POLICIES

Unlisted Procedures

PUBLISHED

Provider Update, March 2026

Provider Update, March 2025

Provider Update, January/May 2024

Provider Update, September 2022

REFERENCES

1. Sidmar. Healthcare Data. 2023; <https://sidmar.com/healthcare/healthcare-data/>. Accessed September 10, 2025.
2. Washington State Department of Labor & Industries. AquaMED Technology Assessment. 1998; https://www.lni.wa.gov/patient-care/treating-patients/treatment-guidelines-and-resources/_docs/AquaMedTA.pdf. Accessed September 10, 2025.
3. Chiropractic Economics. AquaMED and HydroMassage announce brand integration. January 28, 2009; <https://www.chiroeco.com/aquamed-and-hydromassage-announce-brand-integration/>. Accessed September 10, 2025.
4. Wellness Space Brands. Why Users Love HydroMassage. <https://wellnessspace.com/hydromassage-440-g3/>. Accessed September 10, 2025.
5. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). NICE guideline [NG65]. Spondyloarthritis in over 16s: diagnosis and management. February 28, 2017; <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng65>. Accessed September 10, 2025.

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