Medical Coverage Policy | Interferential Current Stimulation

EFFECTIVE DATE: 10|01|2026
POLICY LAST REVIEWED: 06|03|2026

OVERVIEW
Interferential current stimulation (IFS) is a type of electrical stimulation used to reduce pain. The technique has been proposed to decrease pain and increase function in patients with osteoarthritis and to treat other conditions such as constipation, irritable bowel syndrome, dyspepsia, and spasticity.

MEDICAL CRITERIA
Not applicable

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION
Not applicable

POLICY STATEMENT
Medicare Advantage Plans
Interferential current stimulation is considered not covered as the evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

Commercial Products
Interferential current stimulation is considered 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 appropriate Member Certificate, Subscriber Agreement, or Evidence of Coverage for applicable not medically necessary coverage.

BACKGROUND
Interferential current stimulation (IFS) is a type of electrical stimulation that has been investigated as a technique to reduce pain, improve function and range of motion, and treat gastrointestinal disorders.

This stimulation uses paired electrodes of 2 independent circuits carrying high-frequency and medium-frequency alternating currents. The superficial electrodes are aligned on the skin around the affected area. It is believed that IFS permeates the tissues more effectively, and with less unwanted stimulation of cutaneous nerves, and is more comfortable than transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation. There are no standardized protocols for the use of IFS; IFS may vary by the frequency of stimulation, the pulse duration, treatment time, and electrode-placement technique.

A number of IFS devices have been cleared for marketing by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration through the 510(k) process, including the RS-4i® (RS Medical). Interferential current stimulation may be included in multimodal electrotherapy devices such as transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation and functional electrostimulation.

For individuals who have musculoskeletal conditions who receive interferential current stimulation (IFS), the evidence includes randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and meta-analyses. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, functional outcomes, quality of life, medication use, and treatment-related morbidity. Placebo-controlled randomized trial(s) have found that IFS when used to treat musculoskeletal pain and impaired function(s), does not significantly improve outcomes. Meta-analyses for IFS in musculoskeletal conditions have generally found IFS to be no more effective than other therapies. One network meta-analysis did find improvement

with IFS compared with control, but the analysis is limited by indirect comparisons. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have gastrointestinal disorders who receive IFS, the evidence includes RCTs. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, functional outcomes, quality of life, medication use, and treatment-related morbidity. Interferential current stimulation has been tested for a variety of gastrointestinal conditions, with a small number of trials completed for each condition. The results of the trials are mixed, with some reporting benefit and others not. This body of evidence is inconclusive on whether IFS is an efficacious treatment for gastrointestinal conditions. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have poststroke spasticity who receive IFS, the evidence includes RCTs. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, functional outcomes, quality of life, and treatment-related morbidity. The RCTs had small sample sizes and very short follow-up(immediately posttreatment to 5 weeks). 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

The following HCPCS code(s) are considered not covered for Medicare Advantage Plans and not medically necessary for Commercial Products:

S8130 Interferential current stimulator, 2 channel
S8131 Interferential current stimulator, 4 channel

RELATED POLICIES

None

PUBLISHED

Provider Update, August 2026
Provider Update, December 2025
Provider Update, October 2024
Provider Update, August 2023
Provider Update, September 2022

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