OVERVIEW
Thermography is a noninvasive imaging technique that is intended to measure temperature distribution in organs and tissues. The visual display of this temperature information is known as a thermogram. Thermography has been proposed as a diagnostic tool for treatment planning, and for evaluation of treatment effects for a variety of conditions.

MEDICAL CRITERIA
Not applicable

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION
Not applicable

POLICY STATEMENT
BlueCHiP for Medicare and Commercial Products
The use of all forms of thermography 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 Benefit Booklet, Evidence of Coverage, or Subscriber Agreement for limitations of benefits/coverage when services are not medically necessary.

BACKGROUND
Thermography involves the use of an infrared scanning device and can include various types of telethermographic infrared detector images and heat-sensitive cholesteric liquid crystal systems. Infrared radiation from the skin or organ tissue reveals temperature variations by producing brightly colored patterns on a liquid crystal display. Interpretation of the color patterns is thought to assist in the diagnosis of many disorders such as complex regional pain syndrome (previously known as reflex sympathetic dystrophy), breast cancer, Raynaud phenomenon, digital artery vasospasm in hand-arm vibration syndrome, peripheral nerve damage following trauma, impaired spermatogenesis in infertile men, degree of burns, deep vein thrombosis, gastric cancer, tear-film layer stability in dry-eye syndrome, Frey syndrome, headaches, low-back pain, and vertebral subluxation.

Thermography may also assist in treatment planning and procedure guidance by accomplishing the following tasks: identifying restricted areas of perfusion in coronary artery bypass grafting, identifying unstable atherosclerotic plaque, assessing response to methylprednisone in rheumatoid arthritis, and locating high undescended testicles.

There is insufficient evidence to support the use of thermography. Sufficient data are lacking that thermography can accurately diagnose any condition or improve the accuracy of another diagnostic tool. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes. Thus, thermography is considered not medically necessary.
BlueCHiP for Medicare and Commercial Products

There is no specific code for Thermography therefore, Thermography services should be reported using the following unlisted code and are considered not medically necessary:

93799 Unlisted cardiovascular service or procedure

RELATED POLICIES
Not applicable

PUBLISHED
Provider Update, March 2018
Provider Update, March 2017
Provider Update, April 2016
Provider Update, August 2015
Provider Update, August 2014
Provider Update, August 2013
Provider Update, August 2012

REFERENCES
This medical policy is made available to you for informational purposes only. It is not a guarantee of payment or a substitute for your medical judgment in the treatment of your patients. Benefits and eligibility are determined by the member's subscriber agreement or member certificate and/or the employer agreement, and those documents will supersede the provisions of this medical policy. For information on member-specific benefits, call the provider call center. If you provide services to a member which are determined to not be medically necessary (or in some cases medically necessary services which are non-covered benefits), you may not charge the member for the services unless you have informed the member and they have agreed in writing in advance to continue with the treatment at their own expense. Please refer to your participation agreement(s) for the applicable provisions. This policy is current at the time of publication; however, medical practices, technology, and knowledge are constantly changing. BCBSRI reserves the right to review and revise this policy for any reason and at any time, with or without notice. Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.