Medical Coverage Policy

Paraspinal Surface Electromyography (SEMG) to Evaluate and Monitor Back Pain

☐ Device/Equipment  ☐ Drug  ☐ Medical  ☐ Surgery  ☐ Test  ☑ Other

Effective Date: 10/1/2010  Policy Last Updated: 3/20/2012

☐ Prospective review is recommended/required. Please check the member agreement for preauthorization guidelines.

☑ Prospective review is not required.

Description:
Paraspinal surface electromyography (SEMG) is a procedure that places electrodes on (but not into) the skin above a muscle to read the electrical activity of the muscle. This procedure is office based, does not penetrate into the skin, and it is not painful.

Paraspinal SEMG is may be most commonly used by physiatrists or chiropractors. SEMG devices approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) include those that use a single electrode or a fixed array of multiple surface electrodes. The following clinical applications of the paraspinal SEMG have been proposed:

- Clarification of a diagnosis (e.g., muscle, joint or disc disease)
- Select a course of medical therapy
- Select a type of physical therapy
- Pre-operative evaluation
- Post-operative rehabilitation
- Follow-up of acute low back pain
- Evaluation of exacerbation of chronic low back pain
- Evaluation of pain management treatment techniques

The American Association of Electrodiagnostic Medicine notes that: “There is in fact almost no literature to support the use of SEMG in the clinical diagnosis and management of nerve or muscle disease. Still, the SEMG may prove of value in the future in helping to monitor the progression of disorders of nerves and muscles.”

Surface electromyography is not medically necessary due to insufficient evidence in the published, peer-reviewed, scientific literature to support its use.

Medical Criteria:
Paraspinal surface electromyography to evaluate and monitor back pain is considered **not medically necessary** because there is insufficient evidence in the published medical literature to demonstrate its safety and efficacy in the treatment of back pain.

Policy:
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Coverage:
Benefits may vary between groups/contracts. Please refer to the appropriate Evidence of Coverage, Subscriber Agreement, or Benefit Booklet for applicable not medically necessary benefits/coverage.

Coding:
The following HCPCS code is specific to surface EMG:
S3900
S3900

At this time there are no specific CPT code(s) for surface electromyography (EMG) (other than 96002, dynamic surface electromyography, during walking or other functional activities, 1–12 muscles, which is part of the CPT coding for motion analysis). Existing codes for EMG (95860-95872) explicitly describe needle EMG, in which a needle is inserted into an individual muscle. Therefore, these codes do not describe surface EMG and would be misrepresentation.

One of the following nonspecific CPT codes might be used:
95999
97799
99199

Also known as:
SEMG

Related to:
Not applicable

Published:
Provider Update, June 2010
Provider Update, July 2011
Provider Update, June 2012

References:


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