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Medical Policy

Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulator (TENS Units)

Policy Number: 1066

Policy History			
Approve Date:	10/20/2016	Effective Date:	10/20/2016
Reviewed/Revised Dates:	10/20/2017, 10/20/2018, 05/09/2019, 10/1/2020		

Preauthorization	
All Plans	Benefit plans vary in coverage and some plans may not provide coverage for certain service(s) listed in this policy. Decisions for authorization are subject to all terms and conditions of the applicable benefit plan, including specific exclusions and limitations as well as applicable state and/or federal laws. Please review the benefit plan descriptions for details.

Policy

Indications of Coverage

I. WEA Trust considers Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulators (TENS) medically necessary and will approve for a 30 day trial when one of the following criteria are met:
   A. Used as an adjunct or as an alternative to the use of drugs either in the treatment of acute post-operative pain in the first 30 days after surgery OR
   B. For certain types of chronic intractable (minimum of three months duration) pain that has not adequately responsive to other methods of treatment including physical therapy and pharmacotherapy AND
   C. The back pain is not a manifestation of a clearly identified and generally recognized primary disease entity, as metastatic cancers of the spine or Rheumatoid Arthritis.

II. Ongoing treatment with transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulators is considered medically necessary IF
   A. The treatment significantly alleviates the pain AND
   B. Ordering physician documents that the member is likely to derive significant therapeutic benefit from continued use of the unit over a long period of time. (This documentation must include evaluations notes of the member after the initial trial period and must also indicate how often the member used the TENS unit, the typical duration of use each time, and the results).

III. WEA Trust considers a form-fitting conductive garment medically necessary DME only when it has been approved for marketing by the FDA, has been prescribed by a doctor for delivering TENS for one of the medically necessary indications listed above, and any of the following criteria is met:
   A. The member cannot manage without the conductive garment due to the large area or the large number of sites to be stimulated, and the stimulation would have to be delivered so frequently that it is not feasible to use conventional electrodes, adhesive tapes, and lead wires OR
   B. The member has a medical need for rehabilitation strengthening following an injury where the nerve supply to the muscle is intact OR
   C. The member has a skin problem or other medical conditions that precludes the application of conventional electrodes, adhesive tapes, and lead wires OR

D. The member requires electrical stimulation beneath a cast to treat disuse atrophy, where the nerve supply to the muscle is intact.

IV. WEA Trust considers Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulators not medically necessary or appropriate for all other indications including but not limited to treatment of the following types of pain as there is inadequate peer review literature to support the efficacy:
   A. Acute pain other than acute post-operative pain
   B. Chronic malignant pain
   C. Acute and chronic headaches, including migraines
   D. Adhesive capsulitis (frozen shoulder)
   E. Chronic low back pain
   F. Deep abdominal pain
   G. Hip fracture pain
   H. Neuropathic pain
   I. Pelvic pain
   J. Phantom pain
   K. Stump pain
   L. Temporomandibular joint (TMJ) pain
   M. Musculoskeletal pain in hemophilia
   N. Pain management in patients with burns
   O. Peripheral arterial disease
   P. Post total knee arthroplasty pain
   Q. Rotator cuff disease (i.e. calcific tendinitis, rotator cuff tendinitis and subacromial rotator cuff disease)

V. WEA Trust considers TENS with Low Level Laser Therapy (LLLT) e.g. the Neurolumen device for the treatment of Morton's neuroma and all other indications experimental and investigation because its clinical value has not been established.

VI. WEA Trust considers combination stimulation devices experimental and investigational for all indications:
   A. ICS and muscle stimulator (e.g. RS-4i sequential stimulator, EMSI Tens/EMS-14) OR
   B. TENS with ICS OR
   C. TENS with NMES OR
   D. TENS with Ultrasound device

Background

TENS uses a battery-operated device that applies electrical stimulation at the site of pain by wired electrodes that are taped to the surface of the skin. TENS can also be delivered through the use of a form-fitting conductive garment (for example, a garment with conductive fibers that are separated from the individual's skin by layers of fabric). This garment is applied when a condition exists that precludes conventional TENS electrode placement. TENS has been used to relieve pain related to musculoskeletal conditions, or pain associated with active or post-trauma injury.

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