Injectable Bulking Agents for the Treatment of Urinary and Fecal Incontinence

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Policy
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City (Blue KC) will provide coverage for periurethral bulking agents when it is determined to be medically necessary because the criteria shown below are met.

When Policy Topic is covered
The use of cross-linked collagen, carbon-coated spheres, calcium hydroxylapatite, or polydimethylsiloxane may be considered medically necessary to treat stress urinary incontinence in men and women who have failed appropriate conservative therapy.

When Policy Topic is not covered
The use of autologous cellular therapy (e.g., myoblasts, fibroblasts, muscle-derived stem cells, or adipose-derived stem cells), autologous fat, and autologous ear chondrocytes to treat stress urinary incontinence is considered investigational.

The use of any other periurethral bulking agent, including, but not limited to Teflon®, is considered investigational.

The use of periurethral bulking agents to treat urge urinary incontinence is considered investigational.

The use of perianal bulking agents to treat fecal incontinence is considered investigational.

Considerations
There are HCPCS codes for the bulking agents used in this procedure. L8603 describes collagen implant material, such as Contigen, and L8606 describes synthetic bulking agents, such as carbon-coated beads or copolymers (Durasphere or Uryx). The physician services associated with urethral bulking agents are described by CPT code 51715. See coding section below.

Patients should have had inadequate response to conservative therapy or therapies; in general, these treatments should have been used for at least 3 months. Conservative therapy for stress incontinence includes pelvic floor muscle exercises and behavioral changes, such as fluid management and moderation of physical activities that provoke incontinence. Additional options include intravaginal estrogen therapy, use of a pessary, and treatment of other underlying causes of incontinence in patients amenable to these treatments.

Description of Procedure or Service
Bulking agents are injectable substances used to increase tissue bulk. They can be injected periurethrally to treat urinary incontinence and perianally to treat fecal incontinence. A number of products have been developed; the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved several bulking agent products for treating urinary incontinence and 1 for treating fecal incontinence.

Background
Injectable bulking agents are space-filling substances used to increase tissue bulk. When used to treat stress urinary incontinence (SUI), bulking agents are injected periurethrally to increase the tissue bulk and thereby increase resistance to the outflow of urine. The bulking agent is injected into the periurethral tissue as a liquid that then solidifies into a spongy material to bulk the urethral wall. Bulking agents may be injected over a course of several treatments until the desired effect is achieved. Periurethral bulking agents have been widely used for incontinence in women. Men have also been treated, typically those with postprostatectomy incontinence.

Following the success of periurethral bulking agents for treating SUI, bulking agents injected into the anal canal have been proposed for treating fecal incontinence. In particular, bulking agents are a potential treatment for passive fecal incontinence associated with internal anal sphincter dysfunction. The bulking agent is injected into the submucosa of the anal canal to increase tissue bulk in the area, which narrows the opening of the anus. Current treatment options for fecal incontinence include conservative measures eg, dietary changes, pharmacotherapy and pelvic floor muscle exercises, sacral nerve stimulation, and surgical interventions to correct an underlying problem.

Key factors in determining the optimal product are biocompatibility, durability, and absence of migration. A number of periurethral bulking agents to treat urinary incontinence have been cleared for marketing by FDA; however, products developed to date have not necessarily met all criteria of the ideal bulking agents. The first FDA-approved product was crosslinked collagen (eg, Contigen®). The agent was found to be absorbed over time and symptoms could recur, requiring additional injections. Contigen production was discontinued in 2011. Other periurethral bulking agents cleared by FDA for urinary incontinence include carbon-coated beads (eg, Durasphere®), spherical particles of calcium hydroxylapatite (CaHA) in a gel carrier (Coaptite®), polydimethylsiloxane (silicone, Macroplastique®), and ethylene vinyl alcohol copolymer implants (eg, Uryx®, marketed under the trade name Tegress® starting in 2005). Tegress was voluntarily removed from the market due to safety concerns.

Several agents identical to or similar to those used for urinary incontinence eg, Durasphere, silicone biomaterial, etc., have been studied for the treatment of fecal incontinence. To date, only 1 bulking agent has been approved by FDA for treating fecal incontinence. This is a formulation of nonanimal stabilized hyaluronic acid/dextranomer in stabilized hyaluronic acid (NASHA Dx) and is marketed by Q-Med as Solesta. A hyaluronic acid/dextranomer formulation (Deflux™) from the same company has been commercially available for a number of years for the treatment of vesicoureteral reflux in children (see Policy on the treatment of vesicoureteral reflux with bulking agents).

Autologous fat and autologous ear chondrocytes have also been used as periurethral bulking agents; autologous substances do not require FDA approval. Polytetrafluoroethylene (Teflon®) has been investigated as an implant material but has not received FDA approval. A more recently explored alternative is cellular therapy with myoblasts, fibroblasts, or stem cells (muscle-derived or adipose-derived). In addition to their use as periurethral bulking agents, it is hoped that transplanted stem cells will undergo self-renewal and multipotent differentiation, which could result in regeneration of the sphincter and its neural connections.

**Regulatory Status**

Several periurethral bulking agents have been approved by the FDA through the premarket approval process. These devices are indicated for the treatment of stress urinary incontinence due to intrinsic sphincter deficiency; other than Contigen, approval is only for use in adult women. Products include:

- In 1993, Contigen (Allergan, Inc.), a cross-linked collagen, was approved. A supplemental approval in 2009 limited the device’s indication to treatment of urinary incontinence due to intrinsic sphincter deficiency in patients (men or women) who have shown no improvement in incontinence for at least 12 months.
- In 1999, Durasphere (Advanced UroScience), pyrolytic carbon-coated zirconium oxide spheres, was approved.
In 2004, Uryx (CR Bard), vinyl alcohol copolymer implants, was approved. In 2005, approval was given to market the device under the trade name Tegress. In 2007, Tegress was voluntarily removed from the market due to safety concerns.

In 2005, Coaptite (BioForm Medical, Inc.), spherical particles of calcium hydroxylapaptite, suspended in a gel carrier, was approved for soft tissue augmentation in the treatment of stress urinary incontinence due to intrinsic sphincter deficiency in adult females.

In 2006, Macroplastique (Uroplasty), polydimethylsiloxane, was approved.

One bulking agent was approved by the FDA through the premarket approval process for treating fecal incontinence. In 2011, non-animal stabilized hyaluronic acid/dextranomer in stabilized hyaluronic acid (NASHA Dx) marketed as Solesta® (Q-Med) is indicated for the treatment of fecal incontinence in patients 18 years and older who have failed conservative therapy.

Rationale
An initial literature search on bulking agents to treat urinary incontinence was performed in 1995. The policy was updated regularly with a literature review using the MEDLINE database. The policy was expanded to include fecal incontinence in 2013. The most recent literature review searched MEDLINE through February 5, 2014. Following is a summary of literature to date on use of injectable bulking agents to treat urinary and fecal incontinence.

Urinary incontinence
A 2012 Cochrane review on periurethral bulking agents for urinary incontinence in women identified 14 randomized controlled trials (RCTs) with sample sizes ranging from 30 to 355 patients that included bulking agents in at least one of the study arms.(1) This was an update of a 2007 review. All trials included women with a urodynamic diagnosis of stress incontinence, and 7 trials limited eligibility to stress incontinence due to intrinsic sphincter deficiency. The studies varied in the type of bulking agent and comparison intervention used. Eight studies compared 2 bulking agents, 2 compared bulking agents with surgery, 1 compared a bulking agent with pelvic floor exercise, and 1 trial used a placebo comparison group. Several of the studies required that women had experienced incontinence for a specified period of time, eg, 6 or 12 months, and/or had already used conservative therapy; 1 study further specified that conservative therapy had to have been used for at least 3 months. The authors stated that data from the trials were not suitable for pooling due to heterogeneity among studies. They concluded that the updated review indicates insufficient evidence to guide practice and recommend that additional RCTs with a placebo group or conservative treatment arm be conducted.

A 2011 systematic review by Davila identified 20 studies meeting their inclusion criteria (prospective clinical studies or RCTs conducted among women with stress urinary incontinence (SUI) and published in English).(2) Nine studies (total N=682) evaluated the bulking agent crosslinked collagen. Rates of patients considered cured or improved in individual studies ranged from 21% to 81% at 12 months, 7% to 52% at 2 years, and 30% to 43% at more than 4 years. There were 8 trials (n=507) using crosslinked polydimethylsiloxane injection. Cure rates ranged from 20% to 71% at 12 months and 18% to 40% at long-term follow-up up to 60 months. The authors concluded that bulking agents have demonstrated effectiveness at 1 year, but results, particularly with older agents, diminish over time, and repeated injections can restore or enhance improvement.

Bulking Agents Approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Cross-linked collagen (Contigen®)

The 1996 Clinical Practice Guidelines for Urinary Continence in Adults, developed by the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (now Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality), concluded that periurethral collagen is curative in 32% of men and 62% of women.(3) An RCT published in 2005 compared the efficacy of collagen injections with surgery in 133 women.(4) Eligibility criteria included stress incontinence for at least 6 months or 1 year after delivery. Twelve-month success rates for
collagen treatment were lower than for surgery (53% vs 72%, respectively). However, there were significantly fewer adverse events in the collagen-treated group (36% vs 63%, respectively). Results from this study support informed decision making in the choice between bulking agents and surgical intervention for SUI. No randomized trials comparing Contigen with conservative therapy or placebo were identified.

**Carbon-coated beads (eg, Durasphere™)**

A double-blind randomized study comparing carbon-coated beads with crosslinked collagen was reported as part of the FDA-approval process for Durasphere™.(5) The study found no difference in efficacy or in the number of treatments between the groups, although the trial length of 12 months may not have been long enough to assess comparative durability.

**Ethylene vinyl alcohol copolymer (EVA, eg, Uryx™ marketed as Tegress™)**

The copolymer implant (Uryx™/ Tegress™) received FDA approval based on a study that randomly assigned 237 women with SUI to undergo periurethral bulking with Uryx or to a “currently marketed absorbable bulking agent.”(6) The effectiveness at 12 months was similar in the 2 groups, with 18.4% of those receiving Uryx reporting that they were dry and 48.7% reporting improvement by 1 grade, compared with 16.5% and 53.2%, respectively, in the control group. A repeat injection was necessary in 75% of these patients to achieve satisfactory results. Following reports of adverse effects,(7) Tegress was voluntarily withdrawn from the market by CR Bard as of January 31, 2007.

**Calcium hydroxylapatite, CaHA (Coaptite®)**

Coaptite® (CaHA) received FDA approval based partly on results from a single-blind randomized noninferiority comparison with collagen among women with SUI.(8) This study was later published and reported on findings from 231 (78%) of 296 enrolled women. For the primary outcome measure, 83 (63%) patients treated with calcium hydroxylapatite and 57 (57%) control patients treated with collagen showed an improvement of 1 grade or more on the 4-grade Stamey Urinary Incontinence Scale at 12-month follow-up. Similar results were obtained by intention-to-treat analysis, with noninferiority of calcium hydroxylapatite to collagen for improvement of at least 1 Stamey grade (58% vs 51%, respectively) and decrease in pad weight (51% vs 38%, respectively) of 50% or more.

**Polydimethylsiloxane (silicone, Macroplastique®)**

FDA approval of Macroplastique® (polydimethylsiloxane) was also partly based on a randomized noninferiority comparison with collagen in women with SUI. Results of this trial were published in 2009.(9) The trial was single-blind; patients, but not providers, were blinded. At 12 months, Macroplastique was found to be noninferior to collagen in terms of the primary efficacy variable, improvement in the Stamey incontinence grade. Seventy-five of the 122 patients (61.2%) in the Macroplastique group and 60 of 125 patients (48%) in the collagen group improved at least 1 Stamey grade (p<0.001 for noninferiority). Twelve of the 247 randomly assigned patients were excluded from the analysis. Two-year data on 67 of the 75 women who responded to treatment with Macroplastique were published in 2010.(10) Fifty-six of the 67 (84%) patients had sustained treatment success at 24 months, defined as an improvement of at least 1 Stamey grade compared with baseline. Forty-five of the 67 (67%) patients evaluated at 24 months were dry (Stamey grade 0). The long-term analysis is limited because it only includes a portion of responders from 1 arm of the trial. The analysis included 67 of 122 (55%) patients originally randomly assigned to receive Macroplastique and did not provide data on the patients in the comparison group.

**Non-FDA-Approved Products**

**Dextranomer/hyaluronic (Dx/HA, Zuidex™) with an injection system (Implacer™)**
The Zuidex-Implacer is a system to inject Dx/HA in the outpatient clinic without the need for endoscopy. An industry-sponsored (Q-Med) randomized noninferiority trial that compared the Zuidex/Implacer system with Contigen conducted in North America was published in 2009.(11) Patients were blinded to treatment group. The primary study outcome was the proportion of women who had an equal to or greater than 50% reduction in urinary leakage on provocation testing from baseline to 12 months after the final treatment (up to 3 treatments were permitted). The primary outcome was achieved by 65% of Zuidex-treated women compared with 84% in the Contigen group; noninferiority of Zuidex was not established. The study is limited by a high rate of missing data; primary outcome data were missing for 35% of randomly assigned patients.

An open multicenter study from Europe reported a 12-month 77% positive response rate (reduction ≥50% for provocation test urinary leakage) with the Dx/HA Zuidex-Implacer system in 142 women who met strict inclusion/exclusion criteria.(12) Similar to the North American trial, this study had a high dropout rate, (24%), as well as an unrepresentative patient population and lack of a comparison group. Twenty-one women recruited as part of this study were followed for a mean of 6.7 years after treatment with the Zuidex-Implacer system.(13) At this long-term follow-up, 7 of 21 (33%) were continent of urine, but 6 of the 7 had undergone other continence procedures since their Zuidex injections.

**Polyacrylamide hydrogel (Bulkamid®)**

Bulkamid is a gel containing 2.5% crosslinked polyacrylamide and 97.5% apyrogenic water. No RCTs or non-RCTs evaluating Bulkamid were identified.

Several case series, conducted in Europe, have been published. A 2010 multicenter series by Lose et al included 135 adult women with symptomatic stress (n=67) or mixed (n=68) incontinence.(14) Eligibility including having symptoms for at least 12 months and having at least 1 episode of incontinence per day. Ninety-eight (73%) completed the 12-month follow-up; 4 additional patients were excluded from the per-protocol analysis due to protocol violations. The primary outcome was response to treatment, defined as patients self-reporting that they considered themselves “improved” or “cured”. The response rate was 71% at 6 months and 66% at 12 months. Corresponding cure rates were 16% and 24%. There were 32 treatment-related adverse effects including 2 cases of urinary retention requiring hospitalization and 10 cases of urinary tract infection.

A 2013 2-center prospective series included 82 women who had stress incontinence lasting at least 12 months.(15) Patients received an injection of Bulkamid and nonresponders were offered a second injection after 3 months. A total of 80 (98%) women were evaluated at 3 and 6 months and 78 (95%) completed the 1-year follow-up. The primary efficacy outcome was the subjective success rate at 1 year, defined as answering 1 or 2 on the Patient Global Improvement Impression (PGI-I) questionnaire, which has a range from 1 (very much better) to 7 (very much worse). In an intention-to-treat analysis, the subjective success rate at 1 year was 74% (61 of 82 patients). Seven patients reported no change, and none reported worsening of symptoms. At 1 year, 87% of patients (71 of 78) were considered to be responders (answer of 1, 2 or 3 on the PGI-I). Twenty-one patients (26%) had adverse events attributable to the injection procedure. The most common adverse event was a urinary tract infection, reported by 8 patients. Four patients reported de novo urinary urgency; in all cases this resolved by 3 months.

The above series lacked comparison groups, which limits the ability to determine the impact of bulking agents on health outcomes. A comparison group is particularly important with subjective outcomes such as the ones reported in these studies.

**Polytetrafluoroethylene (Teflon)**

No published clinical trials were identified.

**Products That Do Not Require FDA Approval**
Autologous fat and autologous ear chondrocytes

These are other materials that have been used as bulking agents but have not demonstrated sustained effectiveness comparable with crosslinked collagen or carbon-coated beads. In a double-blind RCT of 56 female patients that compared periurethral injections of autologous fat (treatment group) with saline (placebo group), Lee et al found that periurethral fat injections did not appear to be more efficacious than placebo for treating stress incontinence.(16) At 3 months, only 6 of 27 patients (22.2%) in the treatment group and 6 of 29 (20.7%) in the placebo group were cured or improved. In addition, 1 death occurred as a result of a pulmonary fat embolism. In another clinical trial of 32 female patients, Bent et al reported that 50% of patients remained dry for 12 months after receiving a single outpatient injection of harvested autologous auricular cartilage.(17) While autologous substances have a nonimmunogenic advantage, their use may be limited by resorption and fibrous replacement along with local discomfort associated with harvesting procedures.

Autologous cellular therapy

In 2007, Strasser et al published the first randomized study on autologous cell therapy for treating SUI.(18) This study has been widely cited as an important advance in the field. However, in September 2008, the Lancet published a statement that they were retracting publication of this study due to ethical and quality concerns.(19) The Lancet retraction states “…in our view, the conclusions of this official investigation pinpoint so many irregularities in the conduct of their (Strasser et al.) work that, taken together, the paper should be retracted from the public record.” Because of this retraction, findings from this study will no longer be cited as evidence in this policy.

Section summary

A number of RCTs and a Cochrane review of RCTs evaluating periurethral bulking agents for the treatment of urinary incontinence have been published. The trials vary in the bulking agent used and the comparison intervention eg, placebo, conservative therapy, or another bulking agent. Due to this heterogeneity among studies, and the small number of studies in each category, the Cochrane review was unable to make specific conclusions about the efficacy of specific bulking agents compared with alternative treatments. Crosslinked collagen is the most established bulking agent that is currently available. The evidence on crosslinked collagen is sufficient to conclude that it is effective in some patients who fail conservative treatment and therefore, is a reasonable alternative to more risky surgical procedures. Results from available trials suggest that carbon-coated spheres, calcium hydroxylapatite, and polydimethylsiloxane have efficacy for treating incontinence that is similar to cross-linked collagen. For other agents, such as autologous cellular therapy, autologous fat, autologous ear chondrocytes, and Teflon, there are few RCTs and little evidence of efficacy.

Fecal incontinence

In 2013, the Cochrane Collaboration published an updated review on perianal injectable bulking agents for treating fecal incontinence.(20) The reviewers identified 5 RCTs with a total of 382 patients comparing bulking agents with placebo, no intervention or an alternative intervention. The previous review, published in 2010, had included 4 RCTs.(21) The 5 identified trials all included adults with internal anal sphincter dysfunction or passive fecal incontinence who had failed previous conservative treatments eg, pelvic floor muscle training. One of the 5 trials, described in more detail next, used the FDA-approved bulking agent dextranomer in stabilized hyaluronic acid (marketed as Solesta). Two trials used a placebo or sham control, 2 compared different bulking agents and the fifth trial compared 2 methods of injecting the same agent. Length of follow-up ranged from 3 to 12 months. Four of the trials were judged to be of high or uncertain risk of bias. The greatest potential source of bias was lack (or unclear) blinding of outcome assessment and lack of blinding of surgeons performing the procedure. Due to heterogeneity among trials, study findings were not pooled. Overall, conclusions on efficacy were limited by the small number of RCTs identified, most of which had methodologic limitations; moreover, there was a lack of long-term follow-up.
Previously, in 2011, 2 systematic reviews were published that included observational studies and RCTs evaluating bulking agents for treating fecal incontinence. \(^{(22,23)}\) Although data from RCTs are needed to draw conclusions about efficacy of bulking agents, data from observational studies are useful for analysis of safety outcomes. Hussain et al included 1070 patients from 39 studies in a safety analysis. Adverse events occurred in 139 patients (13.5%). The most common complication was pain, which occurred in 67 patients (6.5%) followed by leakage of injected material, which was reported by 58 patients (5.6%). The authors did not report the number of serious adverse events.

The RCT evaluating Solesta that was included in the Cochrane review was published in 2011 by Graf et al. \(^{(24)}\) This was an industry-sponsored multicenter RCT that compared Solesta with sham treatment in 206 adult patients. To be eligible for inclusion, patients needed to have a Cleveland Clinic Florida Fecal Incontinence Score (CCFIS) of 10 or higher, at least 4 documented incontinence episodes in 2 weeks, symptoms for at least 12 months and have failed at least 1 medically supervised conservative treatment (which could include dietary modification, fiber supplements or loperamide hydrochloride). Patients received an initial injection, and those with persistent symptoms, and no substantial adverse effects at 1 month were offered a second injection. A total of 112 patients (86%) in the active treatment group and 61 patients (87%) in the sham group received a second procedure. Response to treatment was defined as a reduction in the number of incontinence episodes by 50% or more compared with baseline. The study was double-blind for the first 6 months of follow-up; at 6 months, patients in the sham group were offered active treatment. Thus, the primary efficacy outcome was assessed at 6 months.

A total of 197 of 206 (96%) of randomized patients completed the 6-month follow-up and were included in the primary efficacy analysis. Seventy-one (52%) in the active treatment group and 22 (31%) in the sham group had a 50% or greater reduction in incontinence episodes at 6 months. The difference between groups was statistically significant (odds ratio [OR], 2.36; 95% confidence interval [CI], 1.24 to 4.47; \(p=0.009\)). Findings on secondary outcomes at 6 months were mixed. For example, the mean increase in number of incontinence-free days was significantly higher in the active treatment group than the sham group (3.1 vs 1.7, respectively; \(p=0.016\)), but the median decrease in number of incontinence episodes did not differ significantly between groups (6.0 vs 3.0, respectively; \(p=0.09\)). Moreover, change in the CCFIS did not differ significantly at 6 months; (2.5 points in the active treatment group vs 1.7 points in the sham treatment group). Quality of life was measured by the fecal incontinence quality of life instrument, which has 4 subscales. One of the 4 subscales (coping and behavior) improved significantly more in the treatment than the sham group at 6 months. Change in scores on the other 3 subscales (lifestyle, depression and self-perception, embarrassment) did not differ significantly between groups at 6 months. The authors did not report the proportion of patients who were continent at follow-up, either as a primary or secondary outcome.

During the 6-month blinded treatment phase, 128 adverse events were reported in the active treatment group and 29 in the sham group. The most common adverse event in the active treatment group was proctalgia, which occurred in 19 patients (14%). In contrast, 2 patients (3%) in the sham group reported proctalgia. Moreover, 10 patients (7%) in the active treatment group and 1 patient (1%) in the sham group had rectal hemorrhage. Infection site bleeding occurred in 12 patients (17%) in the sham group and 7 patients (5%) in the active treatment group. Two serious adverse events were reported, both in the active treatment group; there was 1 rectal abscess and 1 prostate abscess.

The Cochrane review searched the literature through May 2012. Subsequently, in 2013, Dehli et al in Norway published findings of an RCT evaluating Solesta, an FDA-approved nonanimal stabilized hyaluronic acid/dextranomer in stabilized hyaluronic acid (NASHA Dx) bulking agent. \(^{(25)}\) A total of 126 adults with fecal incontinence were randomized to receive injectable bulking agents \((n=62)\) or a 6 month biofeedback intervention \((n=64)\). Patients in the bulking agent group who reported minor or no symptom improvement at 3 months received a second injection. The primary efficacy outcome was incontinence severity, as measured by the St. Mark’s score, which can range from 0 (perfect continence) to 24 (maximal incontinence). A St. Mark’s score of at least 4 was required for study participation. Ten patients (8%) dropped out of the study before 6 months. At the 6-month follow-up, the
mean St. Mark’s score in the biofeedback group had decreased from 12.6 points (95% CI, 11.4 to 13.8) at baseline to 9.2 points (95% CI, 7.9 to 10.5). In the bulking agents group, mean scores were 12.9 (95% CI, 11.8 to 14.0) at baseline and 8.9 (95% CI, 7.6 to 10.2) at 6 months. The difference between groups in St. Mark’s score reduction at 6 months was not statistically significant. In addition, change in St. Mark’s score did not differ between groups at 24 months; only 61 patients (49%) completed the 24-month follow-up. Three of the first 10 patients in the bulking agent group got infections at the injection site and underwent treatment; subsequent patients in this group received prophylactic antibiotics.

Longer-term data on Solesta are available from an uncontrolled study conducted in Spain.(26) A total of 115 patients with fecal incontinence received 4 injections of Solesta. Eighty-three of 115 patients (72%) completed the 24-month follow-up. The primary efficacy end point was response to treatment, defined as at least a 50% reduction from baseline in the number of fecal incontinence episodes recorded in a 28-day diary. At the 24-month follow-up, 52 of 83 (63%) of patients with data available had responded to treatment. The median number of incontinence-free days in a 28 day period increased from 14.6 at baseline to 21.7 at 24 months. The study is limited by lack of a comparison group and a high dropout rate.

Another 2013 RCT was conducted in Australia and compared 2 bulking agents for fecal incontinence. Neither of the 2 bulking agents are FDA-approved for use in the U.S.(27) Moreover, the study was terminated early because 1 of the 2 agents was removed from the Australian Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. The study found no difference in efficacy between the 2 agents. The trial lacked a comparison group of patients who did not receive bulking agents, which limits the ability to draw conclusions about the relative efficacy of bulking agents to sham or alternative treatments.

Section summary

Several RCTs and a systematic review of RCTs on bulking agents for the treatment of fecal incontinence have been published. Two RCTs used the FDA-approved product, NASHA Dx (Solesta). One RCT using Solesta found that a significantly greater proportion of patients receiving active treatment compared with sham had at least a 50% reduction in incontinence episodes at 6 months. Secondary outcomes were mixed, and the authors did not report the number of patients who attained continence. Moreover, outcomes were not compared in the treatment and sham groups beyond 6 months, and side effects were more prevalent in the treatment group. The other RCT did not find a significant difference in efficacy between Solesta and biofeedback. Overall, the evidence is not sufficient to conclude whether bulking agents are an effective treatment for fecal incontinence. Corroboration of the single positive trial is needed, and controlled trials with longer follow-up are important to determine the durability of any treatment effect.
polydimethylsiloxane have efficacy for treating incontinence and have efficacy and safety similar to crosslinked collagen. Thus, these bulking agents may be considered medically necessary for patients with urinary incontinence who have failed conservative therapy. There is insufficient published evidence on the efficacy of autologous cellular therapy, autologous fat, autologous ear chondrocytes, and other treatments such as Teflon. Therefore, use of these agents to treat urinary incontinence is considered investigational.

There is insufficient evidence that injectable bulking agents improve the net health outcome for patients with fecal incontinence. One of 2 trials evaluating the FDA-approved product found benefit, but had limitations. Thus, injectable bulking agents are considered investigational for treating fecal incontinence.

Practice Guidelines and Position Statements

In 2010, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada Urogynaecology Committee published a guideline on the evaluation and treatment of recurrent urinary incontinence after pelvic floor surgery.(28) The guideline recommends that conservative management be used as first-line therapy. It also stated that patients with significantly decreased urethral mobility may be managed with periurethral bulking agents as one of several treatment options.

In 2007, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) in the U.K. published guidance on injectable bulking agents for treating fecal incontinence.(29) The guidance stated that there is insufficient evidence to support the safety and efficacy of injectable bulking agents for fecal incontinence, and use of these products should take place in the context of a clinical trial.

In 2007, the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons published practice parameters for the treatment of fecal incontinence.(30) The document included the following statement on bulking agents:

“When passive fecal incontinence caused by internal sphincter dysfunction is the predominant symptom, injectable therapy seems to be effective and safe, although its long-term efficacy has yet to be defined. Level of Evidence: II; Grade of Recommendation: B.”

In 2005 (2013), the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) issued a practice bulletin on urinary incontinence in women.(31) The practice bulletin included a recommendation for injection of bulking agents (ie, collagen, carbon-coated beads, and fat) as second-line therapy or in women with urinary incontinence who are ineligible for surgery. This recommendation was based on limited or inconsistent scientific evidence.

In 2013, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) in the U.K. amended its 2006 clinical guideline on urinary incontinence in women. The guideline now recommends considering intramural bulking agents (silicone, carbon-coated zirconium beads or hyaluronic acid/dextran copolymer) for the management of stress urinary incontinence if conservative management has failed. Women should be made aware that repeat injections may be needed to achieve efficacy and that efficacy diminishes with time and is inferior to that of synthetic tapes or autologous rectus fascial slings.(32)

Medicare National Coverage

The Medicare National Coverage Determination for Incontinence Control Devices (230.10) addresses collagen implants but not other types of bulking agents.(33) Specific information on coverage of collagen implants is, as follows:

“Coverage of a collagen implant, and the procedure to inject it, is limited to the following types of patients with stress urinary incontinence due to ISD [intrinsic sphincteric deficiency]:

- Patients with ISD
- Patients with no other options for treatment
- Patients who have not responded to previous treatments
- Patients who have a high likelihood of success with this treatment

Providers should consult with patients and consider the risks and benefits of this treatment before proceeding.”
- Male or female patients with congenital sphincter weakness secondary to conditions such as myelomeningocele or epispadias;
- Male or female patients with acquired sphincter weakness secondary to spinal cord lesions;
- Male patients following trauma, including prostatectomy and/or radiation; and
- Female patients without urethral hypermobility and with abdominal leak point pressures of 100 cm H₂O or less.

Patients whose incontinence does not improve with 5 injection procedures (5 separate treatment sessions) are considered treatment failures, and no further treatment of urinary incontinence by collagen implant is covered. Patients who have a recurrence of incontinence following successful treatment with collagen implants in the past (e.g., 6-12 months previously) may benefit from additional treatment sessions. Coverage of additional sessions may be allowed but must be supported by medical justification.

No national coverage determination was identified on injectable bulking agents for treating fecal incontinence.

References


46999  Unlisted procedure, anus
51715  Endoscopic injection of implant material into the submucosal tissues of the urethra and/or bladder neck.
C9735  Anoscopy; with directed submucosal injection(s), any substance
L8603  Injectable bulking agent, collagen implant, urinary tract, 2.5 ml syringe, includes shipping and necessary supplies
L8605  Injectable bulking agent, dextranomer/hyaluronic acid copolymer implant, anal canal, 1 ml, includes shipping and necessary supplies
L8606  Injectable bulking agent, synthetic implant, urinary tract, 1 ml syringe, includes shipping and necessary supplies
Q3031  Collagen skin test

Additional Policy Key Words
N/A

Policy Implementation/Update Information
2/1/00  No policy statement changes.
2/1/01  No policy statement changes. Title changed to Collagen Injections for Stress Incontinence.
2/1/02  Policy statement revised to address cross-linked collagen or carbon-coated spheres. Both are considered medically necessary. Policy statement revised to address the use of Teflon as investigational. Title changed to Periurethral Bulking Agents for the Treatment of Incontinence.
2/1/03  No policy statement changes.
2/1/04  Policy statement revised to include autologous fat, and autologous ear chondrocytes as investigational indications.
2/1/05  Policy statement revised to remove the criteria.
7/1/05  Policy statement revised to include copolymers as medically necessary.
2/1/06  No policy statement changes.
2/1/07  No policy statement changes.
2/1/08  Policy statement revised to include newly FDA-approved bulking agents.
2/1/09  Investigational policy statements revised, separate statement for autologous cellular therapy. Remains investigational.
2/1/10  Policy statement revised. Ethylene vinyl alcohol copolymer (Tegress™) was withdrawn from the market and was removed from list of medically necessary agents
2/1/11  Medically necessary policy statement changed to specify that it applies to patients who fail appropriate conservative therapy; new statement added that periurethral bulking agents for urge incontinence is considered investigational. Change in title from 'incontinence' to 'urinary incontinence.'
2/1/12  No policy statement changes.
2/1/13  No policy statement changes.
6/1/13  Policy expanded to include fecal incontinence. Statement added that perianal bulking agents to treat fecal incontinence is investigational. Title changed from “Periurethral Bulking Agents for the Treatment of Urinary Incontinence” to “Injectable Bulking Agents for the Treatment of Urinary and Fecal Incontinence.”
6/1/14  Updated Description and Background verbiage. Added cpt 46999. No policy statement changes.

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