Medical Policy
Iontophoresis and Phonophoresis as a Transdermal Technique for Drug Delivery

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Policy Number: 095
BCBSA Reference Number: 8.03.14A

Related Policies
- Treatment of Hyperhidrosis (includes iontophoresis as treatment of hyperhidrosis), #406

Policy
Commercial Members: Managed Care (HMO and POS), PPO and Indemnity Medicare HMO BlueSM and Medicare PPO BlueSM Members
Iontophoresis to administer local anesthesia prior to a venipuncture or dermatologic procedure may be MEDICALLY NECESSARY.

Iontophoresis of fentanyl for the short term (i.e., less than 24 hours) management of acute postoperative pain in adult patients requiring opioid analgesia in a monitored facility (e.g., inpatient hospital, outpatient hospital, ambulatory surgical center) may be MEDICALLY NECESSARY.

Iontophoresis as a transdermal drug delivery technique for other medical indications is INVESTIGATIONAL.

Phonophoresis alone or in combination with iontophoresis as a transdermal drug delivery technique for any medical indication is INVESTIGATIONAL.

Prior Authorization Information
Commercial Members: Managed Care (HMO and POS)
Prior authorization is NOT required.

Commercial Members: PPO, and Indemnity
Prior authorization is NOT required.

Medicare Members: HMO BlueSM
Prior authorization is NOT required.
Medicare Members: PPO Blue

Prior authorization is NOT required.

CPT Codes / HCPCS Codes / ICD-9 Codes

The following codes are included below for informational purposes. Inclusion or exclusion of a code does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement. Please refer to the member’s contract benefits in effect at the time of service to determine coverage or non-coverage as it applies to an individual member.

Providers should report all services using the most up-to-date industry-standard procedure, revenue, and diagnosis codes, including modifiers where applicable.

CPT Codes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CPT codes:</th>
<th>Code Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>97033</td>
<td>Application of a modality to 1 or more areas; iontophoresis, each 15 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>97035</td>
<td>Application of a modality to 1 or more areas; ultrasound, each 15 minutes</td>
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Description

Iontophoresis is a method of transdermal local drug delivery using electrical current. A charged ionic drug is placed on the skin with an electrode of the same charge, allowing direct current to drive the drug into the skin, where it is absorbed into the bloodstream and into deeper structures underlying the skin. Ultrasound transdermal delivery involves the use of ultrasonic energy to enhance delivery of solutes either simultaneously or via pre-treatment, and is referred to as sonophoresis or phonophoresis. The proposed mechanism for phonophoresis is to increase skin permeability by the formation of gaseous cavities within the intracellular lipids on exposure to ultrasound.

Iontophoresis has been proposed for numerous uses, including delivery of local anesthetic before skin puncture or other painful skin procedures, local drug delivery for agents such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) or corticosteroids for musculoskeletal inflammatory disorders.

Examples of iontophoresis devices for transdermal local drug delivery include the ONSYS™ fentanyl iontophoretic transdermal system from ALZA and All iontophoresis devices for transdermal local drug delivery for ultrasound transdermal delivery are considered investigational regardless of the commercial name, the manufacturer or FDA approval status, except as noted in the policy statement.

Examples of phonophoresis devices for ultrasound transdermal delivery include the SonoPrep® device from Echo Therapeutics, Inc. All phonophoresis devices for ultrasound transdermal delivery are considered investigational regardless of the commercial name, the manufacturer or FDA approval status.

Summary

The available evidence for the use of iontophoresis to administer local anesthesia prior to a venipuncture or dermatologic procedure, and fentanyl for the short-term (i.e., less than 24 hours) management of acute postoperative pain in adult patients is sufficient to show improvement in net health outcome. Therefore, their use for these indications may be medically necessary.

Given the lack of evidence to show improvement in net health outcome, the use of phonophoresis as a transdermal delivery technique, alone or in combination with iontophoresis, is investigational.

Policy History

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No changes to policy statements.

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<th>Date</th>
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<th>Policy Statements</th>
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**Information Pertaining to All Blue Cross Blue Shield Medical Policies**

Click on any of the following terms to access the relevant information:
- Medical Policy Terms of Use
- Managed Care Guidelines
- Indemnity/PPO Guidelines
- Clinical Exception Process
- Medical Technology Assessment Guidelines

**References**

1. 2003 TEC Assessments: Tab 3.