Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota medical policies do not imply that members should not receive specific services based on the recommendation of their provider. These policies govern coverage and not clinical practice. Providers are responsible for medical advice and treatment of patients. Members with specific health care needs should consult an appropriate health care professional.

**CT COLONOGRAPHY (VIRTUAL COLONOSCOPY)**

**Description:** CT colonography, also known as virtual colonoscopy, is an imaging technique of the colon involving thin-section helical computed tomography to generate high-resolution two-dimensional axial images of the colon. Three-dimensional images, which resemble the endoluminal images obtained with conventional endoscopic (“optical”) colonoscopy, are then reconstructed off-line. While CT colonography requires a full bowel preparation, similar to conventional colonoscopy, no sedation is required and the examination is less time-consuming. However, the technique involves gas insufflation of the intestine which may be uncomfortable to the patient.

CT colonography has been investigated as an alternative to conventional endoscopic colonoscopy, specifically as an alternative screening technique. It has also been investigated for use in patients following incomplete colonoscopy and in patients for whom colonoscopy is not feasible.

**Policy:** The use of CT colonography (virtual colonoscopy) as a screening test for colon cancer is considered **INVESTIGATIVE** due to a lack of clinical evidence demonstrating its impact on improved health outcomes.

Use of CT colonography (virtual colonoscopy) may be considered **MEDICALLY NECESSARY** for the following indications:

- Failed or incomplete fiberoptic colonoscopy of the entire colon, due to inability to pass the colonoscope proximally. Failure to advance the colonoscope may be secondary to:
  - Obstructing neoplasm
  - Spasm
  - Redundant colon
  - Altered anatomy or scarring from previous surgery
  - Stricture
  - Extrinsic compression
- Coagulopathy;
- Lifetime or long-term anticoagulation, with increased patient risk if discontinued;
- Complications from prior fiberoptic colonoscopy;
- Diverticulitis, with increased risk of perforation;
- High-risk for general anesthesia (e.g., known difficult airway);
- Known colonic obstruction, when standard fiberoptic colonoscope is contraindicated.

**Coverage:**
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota medical policies apply generally to all Blue Cross and Blue Plus plans and products. Benefit plans vary in coverage and some plans may not provide coverage for certain services addressed in the medical policies.

Medicaid products and some self-insured plans may have additional policies and prior authorization requirements. Receipt of benefits is subject to all terms and conditions of the member's summary plan description (SPD). As applicable, review the provisions relating to a specific coverage determination, including exclusions and limitations. Blue Cross reserves the right to revise, update and/or add to its medical policies at any time without notice.

For Medicare NCD and/or Medicare LCD, please consult CMS or National Government Services websites.

Refer to the Pre-Certification/Pre-Authorization section of the Medical Behavioral Health Policy Manual for the full list of services, procedures, prescription drugs, and medical devices that require Pre-certification/Pre-Authorization. Note that services with specific coverage criteria may be reviewed retrospectively to determine if criteria are being met. Retrospective denial of claims may result if criteria are not met.

**Coding:**
The following codes are included below for informational purposes only, and are subject to change without notice. Inclusion or exclusion of a code does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement.

**CPT:**
74261 Computed tomographic (CT) colonography, diagnostic, including image postprocessing; without contrast material
74262 Computed tomographic (CT) colonography, diagnostic, including image postprocessing; with contrast material(s) including non-contrast images, if performed
74263 Computed tomographic (CT) colonography, screening, including image postprocessing

**Policy History:**
Developed September 11, 2002