Item/Service Description

A. General

Diagnostic examinations of the head (head scans) and of other parts of the body (body scans) performed by computerized tomography (CT) scanners are covered if medical and scientific literature and opinion support the effective use of a scan for the condition, and the scan is: (1) reasonable and necessary for the individual patient; and (2) performed on a model of CT equipment that meets the criteria in C below.

CT scans have become the primary diagnostic tool for many conditions and symptoms. CT scanning used as the primary diagnostic tool can be cost effective because it can eliminate the need for a series of other tests, is non-invasive and thus virtually eliminates complications, and does not require hospitalization.

Indications and Limitations of Coverage for NCD 221.0

B. Determining Whether a CT Scan Is Reasonable and Necessary

Sufficient information must be provided with claims to differentiate CT scans from other radiology services and to make coverage determinations. Carefully review claims to insure that a scan is reasonable and necessary for the individual patient; i.e., the use must be found to be medically appropriate considering the patient’s symptoms and preliminary diagnosis.

There is no general rule that requires other diagnostic tests to be tried before CT scanning is used. However, in an individual case the contractor's medical staff may determine that use of a CT scan as the initial diagnostic test was not reasonable and necessary because it was not supported by the patient's symptoms or complaints stated on the claim form; e.g., "periodic headaches."

Claims for CT scans are reviewed for evidence of abuse which might include the absence of reasonable indications for the scans, an excessive number of scans or unnecessarily expensive types of scans considering the facts in the particular cases.
NIA CLINICAL GUIDELINE FOR FACE CT:

INTRODUCTION:

Computed tomography (CT) primarily provides information about bony structures, but may also be useful in evaluating some soft tissue masses. It helps document the extent of facial bone fractures secondary to facial abscesses and diagnosing parotid stones. Additionally, CT may be useful in identifying tumor invasion into surrounding bony structures of the face and may be used in the assessment of chronic osteomyelitis.

INDICATIONS FOR FACE CT:

- For the evaluation of sinonasal or facial tumor.
- For the assessment of osteomyelitis.
- For the diagnosis of parotid stones.
- For the assessment of trauma, (e.g. suspected facial bone fractures).
- For the diagnosis of facial abscesses.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELATED TO FACE CT:

Request for a follow-up study - A follow-up study may be needed to help evaluate a patient’s progress after treatment, procedure, intervention or surgery. Documentation requires a medical reason that clearly indicates why additional imaging is needed for the type and area(s) requested.

Facial Bone Fractures – Computed tomography (CT) of the facial bones following trauma provides high quality images of fracture sites and adjacent soft tissue injury. It is helpful in planning surgical intervention, if needed.

Sinonasal and facial tumors - Computed tomography (CT) of the face produces images depicting a patient’s paranasal sinus cavities, hollow and air-filled spaces located within the bones of the face and surrounding the nasal cavity. Face CT of this system of air channels connecting the nose with the back of the throat may be used to evaluate suspected nasopharyngeal tumors. Face CT may detect other tumors and usually provide information about the tumor invasion into surrounding bony structures.

Chronic Osteomyelitis – CT may be used in patients with chronic osteomyelitis to evaluate bone involvement and to identify soft tissue involvement (cellulitis, abscess and sinus tracts). It is used to detect intramedullary and soft tissue gas, sequestra, sinus tracts, and foreign bodies but is not sufficient for the assessment of the activity of the process.

Parotid Stones – The sensitivity of CT to minimal amounts of calcific salts makes it well suited for the imaging of small, semicalcified parotid stones. Early diagnosis and intervention are important because patients with parotid stones eventually develop sialadenitis. With early intervention, it may be possible to avoid further gland degeneration and parotidectomy. The CT scan identifies the exact location of a parotid stone expediting intraoral surgical removal.
REFERENCES


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