FOR CMS (MEDICARE) MEMBERS ONLY

NATIONAL COVERAGE DETERMINATION (NCD) FOR COMPUTED TOMOGRAPHY:

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 PELVIS CT:

INTRODUCTION:

CT provides direct visualization of anatomic structures in the abdomen and pelvis and is a fast imaging tool used to detect and characterize disease involving the abdomen and pelvis. Pelvic imaging begins at the iliac crests through pubic symphysis. It has an ability to demonstrate abnormal calcifications or fluid/gas patterns in the viscera or peritoneal space.

In general, ionizing radiation from CT should be avoided during pregnancy. Ultrasound is clearly a safer imaging option and is the first imaging test of choice, although CT after equivocal ultrasound has been validated for diagnosis. Clinician should exercise increased caution with CT imaging in children, pregnant women and young adults. Screening for pregnancy as part of a work-up is suggested to minimize the number of unexpected radiation exposures for women of childbearing age.

INDICATIONS FOR PELVIS CT:

For known or suspected prostate cancer and for recurrence workup:

- Initial treatment by radical prostatectomy:
  - Failure of PSA to fall to undetectable levels or PSA detectable and rising on at least 2 subsequent determinations.
- Initial treatment radiation therapy:
  - Post-RT rising PSA or positive digital exam and is candidate for local therapy
- In patients without confirmed diagnosis of prostate cancer (with persistently elevated or rising PSA, prior negative prostate biopsy and MRI is contraindicated.
- Prostatic cancer with:
  - PSA greater than twenty
  - Gleason score of seven or greater.

Evaluation of suspicious known mass/tumors (unconfirmed diagnosis of cancer) for further evaluation of indeterminate or questionable findings:

- Initial evaluation of suspicious masses/tumors found only in the pelvis by physical exam or imaging study, such as Ultrasound (US).
- Surveillance: One follow-up exam to ensure no suspicious change has occurred in a tumor in the pelvis. No further surveillance CT unless tumor(s) are specified as highly suspicious, or change was found on last follow-up CT, new/changing sign/symptoms or abnormal lab values.

Evaluation of known cancer for further evaluation of indeterminate or questionable findings, identified by physical examination or imaging exams such as Ultrasound (US):

- Initial staging of known cancer
  - All cancers, excluding the following:
    - Excluding Basal Cell Carcinoma of the skin,
    - Excluding Melanoma without symptoms or signs of metastasis.
- Three (3) month follow-up of known pelvic cancer undergoing active treatment within the past year.
Six (6) month follow-up of known pelvic cancer undergoing active treatment within the past year.
Follow-up of known cancer of patient undergoing active treatment within the past year.
Known cancer with suspected pelvis metastasis based on a sign, symptom or an abnormal lab value.
Cancer surveillance: Once per year (last test must be over ten (10) months ago before new approval) for surveillance of known cancer.

For evaluation of enlargement of organ:
- For the evaluation of an organ enlargement such as uterus or ovaries as evidenced by physical examination or confirmed on any previous imaging study.

For evaluation of suspected infection or inflammatory disease:
- Suspected acute appendicitis (or severe acute diverticulitis) if pelvic pain and tenderness to palpation is present, with at LEAST one of the following:
  - WBC elevated
  - Fever
  - Anorexia or
  - Nausea and vomiting.
- Suspected complications of diverticulitis (known to be limited to the pelvis by prior imaging) with pelvic pain or severe tenderness, not responding to antibiotic treatment.
- Suspected infection in the pelvis

For evaluation of known infection or inflammatory disease follow up:
- Complications of diverticulitis with severe pelvic pain or severe tenderness, not responding to antibiotic treatment, (prior imaging study is not required for diverticulitis diagnosis).
- Known inflammatory bowel disease, (Crohn’s or Ulcerative colitis) with recurrence or worsening signs/symptoms requiring re-evaluation.
- Any known infection that is clinically suspected to have created an abscess in the pelvis.
- Any history of fistula limited to the pelvis that requires re-evaluation, or is suspected to have recurred.
- Abnormal fluid collection seen on prior imaging that needs follow-up evaluation.
- Known infection in the pelvis

For evaluation of known or suspected vascular disease (e.g., aneurysms, hematomas)**:
- Evidence of vascular abnormality identified on imaging studies.
- Evaluation of suspected or known aneurysms limited to the pelvis or in evaluating pelvic extent of aortic aneurysm
  - Suspected or known iliac artery aneurysm >2.5 cm AND equivocal or indeterminate ultrasound results OR
  - Prior imaging (e.g. ultrasound) demonstrating iliac artery aneurysm >2.5cm in diameter OR
  - Suspected complications of known aneurysm as evidenced by clinical findings such as new onset of pelvic pain.
  - Follow up of iliac artery aneurysm: Six month if between 3.0-3.5 cm and if stable follow yearly. If >3.5cm, <six month follow up (and consider intervention)
- Scheduled follow-up evaluation of aorto/iliac endograft or stent.
  - Asymptomatic at six (6) month intervals, for two (2) years
  - Symptomatic/complications related to stent graft – more frequent imaging may be needed.
- Suspected retroperitoneal hematoma or hemorrhage.

**For evaluation of trauma:**
- For evaluation of trauma with lab or physical findings of pelvic bleeding.
- For evaluation of physical or radiological evidence of pelvis fracture.

**Pre-operative evaluation:**
- For pelvic surgery or procedure.

**For post-operative/procedural evaluation:**
- Follow-up of known or suspected post-operative complication involving the hips or the pelvis.
- A follow-up study 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.

**Indication for combination studies for the initial pre-therapy staging of cancer, OR ongoing tumor/cancer surveillance OR evaluation of suspected metastases:**
- < 5 concurrent studies to include CT or MRI of any of the following areas as appropriate depending on the cancer: Neck, Abdomen, Pelvis, Chest, Brain, Cervical Spine, Thoracic Spine or Lumbar Spine.
  - Cancer surveillance excluding small cell lung cancer: Every six (6) months for the first two (2) years then annually thereafter.
  - Cancer surveillance – small cell lung cancer: Up to every 3 months for the first two years then annually thereafter.

**Other indications for Pelvic CT:**
- Persistent pelvic pain not explained by previous imaging/procedure.
- Unexplained pelvic pain in patients seventy-five (75) years or older.
- Hernia with suspected complications.
- Ischemic bowel.
- Known or suspected aseptic/avascular necrosis of hip(s) and MRI is contraindicated after completion initial x-ray.
- Sacroiliitis (infectious or inflammatory) after completion of initial x-ray and MRI is contraindicated.
- Sacroiliac Joint Dysfunction and MRI contraindicated:
  - Persistent back and/or sacral pain unresponsive to four (4) weeks of conservative treatment, received within the past six (6) months, including physical therapy or physician supervised home exercise plan (HEP).

**Combination of studies with Pelvis CT:**
- **Abdomen CT/Pelvis CT/Chest CT/Neck MRI/Neck CT with MUGA** – known tumor/cancer for initial staging or evaluation before starting chemotherapy or radiation treatment.
If an Abdomen/Pelvis CT combo is indicated and the Abdomen CT has already been approved, then the Pelvis CT may be approved.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELATED TO PELVIS CT:

Ultrasound should be considered prior to a request for Pelvis CT for the following evaluations:

- Evaluation or follow up of ovarian mass
- Repeat CT for aneurysm ordered by non-surgeon.

CT for organ enlargement - An abd/pelvis combo is most appropriate because it will demonstrate the kidneys and the ureters. Other organs may require an Abdomen CT or Pelvis CT only.

CT for suspected renal stones - An initial CT study is done to identify the size of the stone and rule out obstruction. *(7 mm is the key size - less than that size the expectation is that it will pass)* After the initial CT study for kidney stone is done, the stone can be followed by x-ray or US (not CT). If a second exacerbation occurs/a new stone is suspected another CT would be indicated to access the size of stone and rule out obstruction.

CT Imaging for Renal Colic and Hematuria – Multidetector computed tomography (CT) is the modality of choice for the evaluation of the urinary tract. It is fast and it has good spatial resolution. It is superior to plain-film for imaging the renal parenchyma. CT protocols include: “stone protocol” for detecting urinary tract calculi, “renal mass protocol” for characterizing known renal masses and CT urography for evaluating hematuria. Non-contrast CT can be used for detecting most ureteral and renal stones but sometimes an intravenous contrast agent is needed to determine the relationship of the calculus to the opacified ureter. CT is an effective imaging examination for diagnosing hematuria caused by urinary tract calculi, renal tumors and urothelia tumors.

CT Imaging for Abdominal and Pelvic Aneurysms – Abdominal and pelvic aneurysms are usually asymptomatic and most are discovered during imaging studies ordered for other indications or, particularly in the abdomen, on physical examination as a pulsatile mass. If a pulsatile abdominal mass is found, abdominal ultrasonography is an inexpensive and noninvasive technique for examination. For further examination, CT may be performed to better define the shape and extent of the aneurysm and the local anatomic relationships of the visceral and renal vessels. CT has high level of accuracy in sizing aneurysms.

**Follow-up of asymptomatic incidentally-detected iliac artery aneurysms:**

- <3.0 cm: rarely rupture, grow slowly, follow-up not generally needed
- 3.0-3.5 cm: followed up initially at 6 months
  - if stable, then annual imaging
- >3.5 cm: greater likelihood of rupture
  - <6 month follow up
  - consider intervention
Combination request of Abdomen CT/Chest CT • A Chest CT will produce images to the level of L3. Documentation for combo is required.

Hematuria and CT Imaging of Urinary Tract – Multidetector CT urography is a first line of investigation in patients with hematuria due to its ability to display the entire urinary tract, including renal parenchyma, pelvicaliceal systems, ureters and bladder with a single imaging test. To evaluate hematuria, the urinary tract is assessed for both calculi and neoplasms of the kidney and or urothelium.

Helical CT of Prostate Cancer – Conventional CT is not useful in detecting prostate cancer as it does not allow direct visualization. Contrast-enhanced MRI is more useful in detecting prostate cancer. Helical CT of the prostate may be a useful alternative to MRI in patients with an increasing PSA level and negative findings on biopsy.

Prostate Cancer – For symptomatic patients and/or those with a life expectancy of greater than 5 years, a bone scan is appropriate for patients with T1 to T2 disease who also have a PSA greater than 20ng/mL or a Gleason score of 8 or higher. Patients with a T3 to T4 disease or symptomatic disease should also receive a bone scan. Pelvic computed tomography (CT) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanning is recommended if there is T3 or T4 disease, or T1 or T2 disease and a nomogram indicates that there is greater than 20% chance of lymph node involvement, although staging studies may not be cost effective until the chance of lymph node positively reaches 45%. Biopsy should be considered for further evaluation of suspicious nodal findings. For all other patients, no addition imaging is required for staging.

Pelvic Trauma and CT Imaging – Helical CT is useful in the evaluation of low or high flow vascular injuries in patient with blunt pelvic trauma. It provides detailing of fractures and position of fracture fragments along with the extent of diastasis of the sacroiliac joints and pubic symphysis. CT helps determine whether pelvic bleeding is present and can identify the source of bleeding. With CT, high flow hemorrhage can be distinguished from low flow hemorrhage aiding the proper treatment.

Bladder Cancer and CT Imaging – The diagnosis of upper tract transitional cell carcinoma is dependent on imaging. CT urography is increasingly being used in the imaging of the upper urinary tract in patients with bladder cancer. Multidetector CT scans are more accurate than the older ones and are used in the diagnosis, staging and surveillance of transitional cell carcinoma of the upper urinary tract.

Urinary Calculi and Reduced Radiation Dose – Studies have been performed to retrospectively determine the effect of 50% and 75% radiation dose reductions on sensitivity and specificity of CT for the detection of urinary calculi. Ciaschini et al found no significant differences between the examinations at 100% radiation dose and those at the reduced dosage for the detection of calculi greater than 3 mm.
REFERENCES


