FEP Medical Policy Manual

FEP 7.01.13 Surgical Treatment of Bilateral Gynecomastia

Effective Policy Date: July 1, 2019
Original Policy Date: September 2012

Related Policies:
None

Surgical Treatment of Bilateral Gynecomastia

Description

Bilateral gynecomastia is a benign enlargement of the male breast, either due to increased adipose tissue, glandular tissue, fibrous tissue, or a combination of all three. Surgical removal of the breast tissue, using either surgical excision or liposuction, may be considered if conservative therapies are not effective or possible.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this evidence review is to evaluate whether surgical treatment of bilateral gynecomastia improves net health outcomes.

POLICY STATEMENT

Surgical removal of breast tissue, such as mastectomy or liposuction, as a treatment of gynecomastia, is considered not medically necessary due to the lack of a functional impairment. See the Benefit Applications section for discussion of potential coverage eligibility based on reconstructive services.

POLICY GUIDELINES

None.

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BENEFIT APPLICATION

Experimental or investigational procedures, treatments, drugs, or devices are not covered (See General Exclusion Section of brochure).

Determination of coverage eligibility for the surgical treatment of bilateral gynecomastia may require consideration of whether such surgery would be considered either essentially cosmetic in nature or reconstructive. Contractual definitions of the scope of reconstructive services that may be eligible for coverage vary. Categories of conditions, which may be included as part of the contractual definition of reconstructive services, include some or all of the following:

- Postsurgery
- Accidental trauma or injury
- Diseases
- Congenital anomalies
- Anatomic variants
- Postchemotherapy.

For example, adolescent gynecomastia may be considered an anatomic variant, while gynecomastia related to liver disease would be considered secondary to a disease process.

Determinations of whether a proposed therapy would be considered reconstructive or cosmetic should always be interpreted in the context of the specific benefits language.

FDA REGULATORY STATUS

Removal of the breast tissue is a surgical procedure and, as such, is not subject to regulation by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

RATIONALE

Summary of Evidence

For individuals with bilateral gynecomastia who receive surgical treatment, the evidence includes case series. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, functional outcomes, health status measures, quality of life, and treatment-related morbidity. Because there are no randomized controlled trials on surgical treatment of bilateral gynecomastia, it is not possible to determine with a high level of confidence whether surgical treatment improves symptoms or functional impairment. Conservative therapy should adequately address any physical pain or discomfort, and gynecomastia does not typically cause functional impairment. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effect of the technology on net health outcomes.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Practice Guidelines and Position Statements

The American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) issued practice criteria for third-party payers in 2002, which was affirmed in 2015. ASPS classified gynecomastia using the following scale, which was "adapted from the McKinney and Simon, Hoffman and Kohn scales".

*Grade I: Small breast enlargement with localized button of tissue that is concentrated around the areola.

*Grade II: Moderate breast enlargement exceeding areola boundaries with edges that are indistinct from the chest.

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"Grade III: Moderate breast enlargement exceeding areola boundaries with edges that are distinct from the chest with skin redundancy present.

"Grade IV: Marked breast enlargement with skin redundancy and feminization of the breast."

According to ASPS, in adolescents, surgical treatment for "[u]nilateral or bilateral grade II or III gynecomastia" may be appropriate if the gynecomastia "persists for more than 1 year after pathological causation is ruled out" (or 6 months if grade IV) and continues "after 6 months of unsuccessful medical treatment for pathological gynecomastia." In adults, surgical treatment for "[u]nilateral or bilateral grade III or IV gynecomastia" may be appropriate if the gynecomastia "persists for more than 3 or 4 months after pathological causes ruled out [and continues] after 3 or 4 months of unsuccessful medical treatment for pathological gynecomastia." ASPS also indicated that surgical treatment of gynecomastia maybe appropriate when distention and tightness cause "pain and discomfort."

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommendations

Not applicable.

Medicare National Coverage

There is no national coverage determination. In the absence of a national coverage determination, coverage decisions are left to the discretion of local Medicare carriers.

REFERENCES


POLICY HISTORY - THIS POLICY WAS APPROVED BY THE FEP® PHARMACY AND MEDICAL POLICY COMMITTEE ACCORDING TO THE HISTORY BELOW:

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 2012</td>
<td>New Policy</td>
<td>Surgical treatment of bilateral gynecomastia is considered not medically necessary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2013</td>
<td>Replace policy</td>
<td>Literature review through August 2013, no new references added, Policy statement and summary unchanged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2015</td>
<td>Replace policy</td>
<td>Policy updated with literature review. Policy statement unchanged.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2017</td>
<td>Replace policy</td>
<td>Policy updated with literature review; reference 3 added. Policy statement unchanged.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 2019</td>
<td>Replace policy</td>
<td>Policy updated with literature review through December 6, 2018; references 5-6 added. Policy statement unchanged.</td>
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