



MEDICAL POLICY STATEMENT INDIANA MARKETPLACE

Policy Name	Policy Number	Date Effective	
Sacroiliac Joint Fusion	MM-0842	08/01/2020	
Policy Type			
MEDICAL	Administrative	Pharmacy	Reimbursement

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A. Subject
Sacroiliac Joint Fusion

B. Background

The sacroiliac (SI) joints are formed by the connection of the sacrum and the right and left iliac bones. The sacrum is the triangular-shaped bone in the lower portion of the spine, below the lumbar spine. While most of the bones (vertebrae) of the spine are mobile, the sacrum is made up of five vertebrae that are fused together and do not move. The iliac bones are the two large bones that make up the pelvis. As a result, the SI joints connect the spine to the pelvis. The sacrum and the iliac bones (ileum) are held together by a collection of strong ligaments. There is relatively little motion at the SI joints. There are normally less than 4 degrees of rotation and 2 mm of translation at these joints.

Sacroiliac Joint (SIJ) dysfunction is indicated by the abnormal movement or malalignment of the sacroiliac joint and is the main source of lower back pain in 15% to 30% of patients. The condition causes disability and pain and may be caused by prior lumbar sacral fusion, trauma, inflammatory arthritis, sacral tumors, osteoarthritis or pregnancy.

Patients may present with low back, groin and/or gluteal pain. SI joint pain can often appear to be disogenic or radicular back pain. This can lead to the potential for inaccurate diagnosis and treatment, reviews caution difficult diagnosis and evidence for efficacy. The minimally invasive procedure for SIJ fusion is performed by an orthopedic or neurologic surgeon in an inpatient or outpatient setting. The procedure typically ranges from 45 to 70 minutes to complete and requires general endotracheal anesthesia, fluoroscopic guidance, and a small (approximately 3 mm) incision in the buttock region. Postoperatively, patients ambulate with a walker or crutches and follow a progressive regimen to develop flexibility and strength until fully ambulatory. Open SIJ fusion typically involves opening the SIJ, denuding of cartilage, and bone grafting. To stabilize the SIJ, the iliac crest bone and the sacrum are typically held together by plates or screws or an interbody fusion cage until the 2 bones fuse.

C. Definitions

- **Conservative Therapy** - is a multimodality plan of care. Multimodality care plans include ALL of the following:
 - **Active Conservative Therapies** - such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, a physician supervised home exercise program (HEP), or chiropractic care.
 - **Home Exercise Program (HEP)** - includes two components that are both required to meet CareSource policy for completion of conservative therapy:
 - An exercise prescription and/or plan documented in the medical record.
 - A follow up documented in the medical record regarding completion of a HEP (after suitable six (6) week period), or inability to complete a HEP due to a stated physical reason- i.e. increased pain, inability to physically perform exercises. (Patient inconvenience or noncompliance without explanation does not constitute “inability to complete”)



- **Passive Conservative Therapies** - such as rest, ice, heat, medical devices, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) unit and prescription medications

D. Policy

I. Sacroiliac Joint Fusion

- A. Prior authorization is required for minimally invasive fusion/stabilization of the sacroiliac joint (SIJ) for the treatment of back pain when the following criteria is met. Maximum number of benefit limits in this policy are based on medical necessity

1. Have undergone and failed a minimum six months of conservative therapy, including:
 - a. ACTIVE conservative therapy as part of a multimodality comprehensive approach and is addressed in the patient's care plan with documentation in the medical record that includes at least ONE of the following:
 01. The patient has received ACTIVE conservative therapy lasting for six (6) MONTHS or more within the past twelve (12) months including ONE of the following:
 - (1) Physical therapy;
 - (2) Occupational therapy;
 - (3) A physician supervised home exercise program (HEP) as defined in this policy; or
 - (4) Chiropractic care.
 02. OR, the medical record documents at least ONE of the following exceptions to the six (6) MONTHS ACTIVE conservative therapy requirement in the past twelve (12) months:
 - (1) Moderate pain with significant functional loss at work or home;
 - (2) Severe pain unresponsive to outpatient medical management;
 - (3) Inability to tolerate non-surgical, non-injection care due to co-existing medical condition(s); or
 - (4) Prior successful injections for same specific condition with relief of at least 3 months duration.
 - b. INACTIVE conservative therapy as part of a multimodality comprehensive approach is addressed in the patient's care plan with documentation in the medical record lasting for six (6) MONTHS or more within the past twelve (12) months including ONE of the following:
 - (1) Rest;
 - (2) Ice;
 - (3) Heat;
 - (4) Medical devices;
 - (5) TENS unit use as defined in this policy; and
 - (6) Pain medications (RX or OTC) such as: non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS), acetaminophen. Opioid narcotics are not required, necessary or recommended to meet pain medication criteria.



2. Patient's report of non-radiating; unilateral pain that is caudal to the lumbar spine (L5 vertebrae), localized over the posterior SIJ, and consistent with SIJ pain.
3. Localized tenderness with palpation of the posterior SIJ in the absence of tenderness of similar severity elsewhere (e.g. greater trochanter, lumbar spine, coccyx) and other obvious sources for their pain do not exist.
4. Positive response to the thigh thrust test OR compression test AND 2 of the following additional provocative tests: Gaenslen's test, Distraction test, Patrick's sign.
5. Exclusion of generalized pain behavior or generalized pain disorders as the primary etiology of the patient's pain.
6. Diagnostic imaging studies that include ALL of the following:
 - a. Imaging (plain radiographs and a CT or MRI) of the SI joint that excludes the presence of destructive lesions (e.g. tumor, infection) or inflammatory arthropathy that would not be properly addressed by percutaneous SIJ fusion;
 - b. Imaging of the ipsilateral hip (plain radiographs) to rule out osteoarthritis; and
 - c. Imaging of the lumbar spine (CT or MRI) to rule out neural compression or other degenerative condition that can be causing low back or buttock pain;
7. At least 75 percent reduction of pain for the expected duration of the anesthetic used following an image-guided, contrast-enhanced SIJ injection on two separate occasions.

II. Exclusions

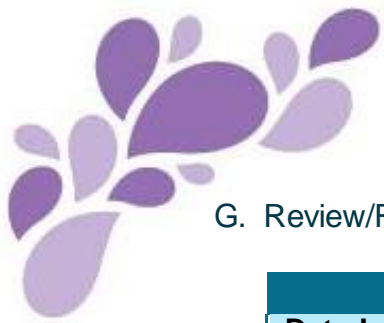
A. Percutaneous SIJ fusion for SIJ pain is NOT indicated in the presence of:

1. Systemic arthropathy such as ankylosing spondylitis or rheumatoid arthritis;
2. Generalized pain behavior (e.g. somatoform disorder) or generalized pain disorder (e.g. fibromyalgia);
3. Infection, tumor, or fracture;
4. Acute, traumatic instability of the SIJ; and
5. Neural compression as seen on an MRI or CT that correlates with the patient's symptoms or other more likely source for their pain.

E. Conditions of Coverage

F. Related Policies/Rules

Sacroiliac Joint Fusion PY-1155



G. Review/Revision History

	DATE	ACTION
Date Issued	05/13/2020	New Policy
Date Revised		
Date Effective	08/01/2020	
Date Archived	08/01/2021	

H. References

- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Local Coverage Determination (LCD): Percutaneous minimally invasive fusion/stabilization of the sacroiliac joint for the treatment of back pain. (L36000). (11/01/2019). Retrieved on December 14, 2019 from www.cms.gov
- Chou, Roger, MD, (2019, January 2). Subacute and chronic low back pain: Nonsurgical interventional treatment. Retrieved October 17, 2019, from www.uptodate.com
- DePhillipo, N. N., Corenman, D. S., Strauch, E. L., & Zalepa King, L. A. (2019, July). Sacroiliac Pain: Structural Causes of Pain Referring to the SI Joint Region. Retrieved October 18, 2019, from www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

The Medical Policy Statement detailed above has received due consideration as defined in the Medical Policy Statement Policy and is approved.

Independent medical review – May 2020

