

# Medicare (CGS) Summary

## Local Coverage Determination (LCD) for Facet Joint Interventions for Pain Management<sup>1</sup>

Effective date: 3/17/22

Facet Joint Interventions are considered **medically reasonable and necessary** for the diagnosis and treatment of chronic pain in patients who meet **ALL** the following criteria:

### Inclusion criteria (ALL are required)

- Moderate to severe chronic neck or low back pain, predominantly axial, that causes functional deficit measured on pain or disability scale\*
- Pain present for minimum of 3 months with documented failure to respond to noninvasive conservative management (as tolerated)
- Absence of untreated radiculopathy or neurogenic claudication (except for radiculopathy caused by facet joint synovial cyst)
- There is no non-facet pathology per clinical assessment or radiology studies that could explain the source of the patient's pain, including but not limited to fracture, tumor, infection, or significant deformity.

\*Pain assessment must be performed and documented at baseline, after each diagnostic procedure using the same pain scale for each assessment. A disability scale must also be obtained at baseline to be used for functional assessment (if patient qualifies for treatment).

## Additional information

### Diagnostic Facet Joint Procedures (Medial Branch Block)

A second diagnostic facet procedure is considered medically necessary to confirm validity of the initial diagnostic facet procedure when administered at the same level. The second diagnostic procedure may only be performed a minimum of 2 weeks after the initial diagnostic procedure. Clinical circumstances that necessitate an exception to the two-week duration may be considered on an individual basis and must be clearly documented in the medical records.

- For the first diagnostic facet joint procedure to be considered medically reasonable and necessary, the patient must meet the criteria outlined under inclusion criteria.
- A second confirmatory diagnostic facet joint procedure is considered medically reasonable and necessary in patients who meet **ALL** the following criteria:
  - ▶ The patient meets the criteria for the first diagnostic procedure; **AND**
  - ▶ After the first diagnostic facet joint procedure, there must be a consistent positive response of at least 80% relief of primary (index) pain (with the duration of relief being consistent with the agent used)

Frequency Limitation: For each covered spinal region, no more than four (4) diagnostic joint sessions will be reimbursed per rolling 12 months, in recognition that the pain generator cannot always be identified with the initial and confirmatory diagnostic procedure.

### Facet Joint Denervation (Radiofrequency Ablation)

The thermal radiofrequency destruction of cervical, thoracic, or lumbar paravertebral facet joint (medial branch) nerves are considered medically reasonable and necessary for patients who meet **ALL** the following criteria:

Initial thermal RFA:

- After the patient has had at least two (2) medically reasonable and necessary diagnostic MBBs, with each one providing a consistent minimum of 80% sustained relief of primary (index) pain (with the duration of relief being consistent with the agent used) **AND**
- Repeat thermal facet joint RFA at the same anatomic site is considered medically reasonable and necessary provided the patient had a minimum of consistent 50% improvement in pain for at least six (6) months **or** at least 50% consistent improvement in the ability to perform previously painful movements and ADLs as compared to baseline measurement using the same scale.

Frequency Limitation: For each covered spinal region, no more than two (2) radiofrequency sessions will be reimbursed per rolling 12 months.

## Limitations

- ▶ Facet joint interventions done without CT or fluoroscopic guidance are considered not reasonable and necessary. This includes facet joint interventions done without any guidance, performed under ultrasound guidance, or with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).
- ▶ General anesthesia is considered not reasonable and necessary for facet joint interventions. Neither conscious sedation nor monitored anesthesia care (MAC) is routinely necessary for intraarticular facet joint injections or medial branch blocks and are not routinely reimbursable. Individual consideration may be given on redetermination (appeal) for payment in rare, unique circumstances if the medical necessity of sedation is unequivocal and clearly documented in the medical record. Frequent reporting of these services together may trigger focused medical review.
- ▶ It is not expected that patients will routinely present with pain in both cervical/thoracic and lumbar spinal regions. Therefore, facet joint interventions (both diagnostic and therapeutic) are limited to one spinal region per session.
- ▶ It is not routinely necessary for multiple blocks (e.g., epidural injections, sympathetic blocks, trigger point injections, etc.) to be provided to a patient on the same day as facet joint procedures. Multiple blocks on the same day could lead to improper or lack of diagnosis. If performed, the medical necessity of each injection (at the same or a different level[s]) must be clearly documented in the medical record. For example, the performance of both paravertebral facet joint procedures(s) and a transforaminal epidural injection (TFESI) at the same or close spinal level at the same encounter would not be expected unless a synovial cyst is compressing the nerve root. In this situation, TFESI may provide relief for the radicular pain, while the facet cyst rupture allows nerve root decompression. Frequent reporting of multiple blocks on the same day may trigger a focused medical review.
- ▶ Facet joint intraarticular injections and medial branch blocks may involve the use of anesthetic, corticosteroids, anti-inflammatories and/or contrast agents, and does not include injections of biologicals or other substances not FDA designated for this use.
- ▶ One to two levels, either unilateral or bilateral, are allowed per session per spine region. The need for a three or four-level procedure bilaterally may be considered under unique circumstances and with sufficient documentation of medical necessity on appeal. A session is a time period, which includes all procedures (i.e., medial branch block (MBB), intraarticular injections (IA), facet cyst ruptures, and RFA ablations that are performed during the same day.
- ▶ If there is an extended time, two years or more, since the last RFA and/or there is a question as to the source of the recurrent pain then diagnostic procedures must be repeated.
- ▶ Therapeutic intraarticular facet injections are not covered unless there is justification in the medical documentation on why RFA cannot be performed. Facet joint procedures in patients for the indication of generalized pain conditions (such as fibromyalgia) or chronic centralized pain syndromes are considered not reasonable and necessary. Individual consideration may be considered under unique circumstances and with sufficient documentation of medical necessity on appeal.
- ▶ In patients with implanted electrical devices, providers must follow manufacturer instructions and extra planning as indicated to ensure safety of procedure.

### **The following are considered not reasonable and necessary and therefore will be denied:**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☒ Intraarticular and extraarticular facet joint prolotherapy</li> <li>☒ Non-thermal modalities for facet joint denervation including chemical, low-grade thermal energy (less than 80 degrees Celsius), laser neurolysis, and cryoablation.</li> <li>☒ Intra-facet implants</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☒ Facet joint procedure performed after anterior lumbar interbody fusion or ALIF.</li> <li>☒ Definitive clinical and/or imaging findings pointing to a specific diagnosis other than facet joint syndrome</li> <li>☒ Diagnostic injections or MMB at the same level as the previously successful RFA procedure</li> </ul> |
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Note: The scales used for measurement of pain and/or disability must be documented in the medical record. Acceptable scales include but are not limited to: verbal rating scales, Numerical Rating Scale (NRS) and Visual Analog Scale (VAS) for pain assessment, and Pain Disability Assessment Scale (PDAS), Oswestry Disability Index (ODI), Oswestry Low Back Pain Disability Questionnaire (OSW), Quebec Back Pain Disability Scale (QUE), Roland Morris Pain Scale, Back Pain Functional Scale (BPFS), and the PROMIS profile domains to assess function.

## Billing and coding<sup>2</sup>

### CPT codes<sup>3</sup>

**64490** Injection(s), diagnostic or therapeutic agent, paravertebral facet (zygapophyseal) joint (or nerves innervating that joint) with image guidance (fluoroscopy or CT), cervical or thoracic; single level

**64491** Injection(s), diagnostic or therapeutic agent, paravertebral facet (zygapophyseal) joint (or nerves innervating that joint) with image guidance (fluoroscopy or CT), cervical or thoracic; second level (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)

**64493** Injection(s), diagnostic or therapeutic agent, paravertebral facet (zygapophyseal) joint (or nerves innervating that joint) with image guidance (fluoroscopy or CT), lumbar or sacral; single level

**64494** Injection(s), diagnostic or therapeutic agent, paravertebral facet (zygapophyseal) joint (or nerves innervating that joint) with image guidance (fluoroscopy or CT), lumbar or sacral; second level (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)

**64633** Destruction by neurolytic agent, paravertebral facet joint nerve(s), with imaging guidance (fluoroscopy or CT); cervical or thoracic, single facet joint

**64634** Destruction by neurolytic agent, paravertebral facet joint nerve(s), with imaging guidance (fluoroscopy or CT); cervical or thoracic, each additional facet joint (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)

**64635** Destruction by neurolytic agent, paravertebral facet joint nerve(s), with imaging guidance (fluoroscopy or CT); lumbar or sacral, single facet joint

**64636** Destruction by neurolytic agent, paravertebral facet joint nerve(s), with imaging guidance (fluoroscopy or CT); lumbar or sacral, each additional facet joint (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)

### ICD-10-CM<sup>4</sup> diagnosis codes

**M47.812** Spondylosis without myelopathy or radiculopathy, cervical region

**M47.813** Spondylosis without myelopathy or radiculopathy, cervicothoracic region

**M47.814** Spondylosis without myelopathy or radiculopathy, thoracic region

**M47.815** Spondylosis without myelopathy or radiculopathy, thoracolumbar region

**M47.816** Spondylosis without myelopathy or radiculopathy, lumbar region

**M47.817** Spondylosis without myelopathy or radiculopathy, lumbosacral region

**M47.892** Other spondylosis, cervical region

**M47.893** Other spondylosis, cervicothoracic region

**M47.894** Other spondylosis, thoracic region

**M47.895** Other spondylosis, thoracolumbar region

**M47.896** Other spondylosis, lumbar region

**M47.897** Other spondylosis, lumbosacral region

**M48.12** Ankylosing hyperostosis [Forestier], cervical region

**M48.13** Ankylosing hyperostosis [Forestier], cervicothoracic region

**M48.14** Ankylosing hyperostosis [Forestier], thoracic region

**M48.15** Ankylosing hyperostosis [Forestier], thoracolumbar region

**M48.16** Ankylosing hyperostosis [Forestier], lumbar region

**M48.17** Ankylosing hyperostosis [Forestier], lumbosacral region

#### Note:

Facet Joint Interventions generally consist of four types of procedures: Intraarticular (IA) Facet Joint Injections, Medial Branch Blocks (MBB), Radiofrequency Ablations (RFA) and Facet cyst rupture/aspiration. This summary provides information for MBB and RFA only.

Diagnostic procedures should be performed with the intent that if successful, radiofrequency ablation (RFA) procedure would be considered the primary treatment goal at the diagnosed level(s).

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**Sources:**

1. CGS Final Effective LCD (L38773). Facet Joint Interventions for Pain Management. Available on CMS website. Retrieved 3/20/23.
2. CGS Billing and Coding Article (A58364).Facet Joint Interventions for Pain Management. Available on CMS website. Retrieved 3/20/23.
3. Current Procedural Terminology 2022, American Medical Association. Chicago, IL 2022. CPT is a registered trademark of the American Medical Association. Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®) is copyright 2022 American Medical Association. All Rights Reserved. Applicable FARS/DFARS apply.
4. International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-10-CM) (available on CMS website).

## Interventional Spine

A healthcare professional must always rely on his or her own professional clinical judgment when deciding the treatment for a particular patient. Stryker does not dispense medical advice and does not recommend any specific protocol or treatment regimen.

The information presented is for information and illustrative purposes. The provider is solely responsible for reporting the codes that accurately describe the services furnished to a particular patient as well as the patient's medical condition. Providers are responsible for their decisions relating to coding, medical necessity and reimbursement submissions. It is the provider's responsibility to determine and document that the services provided are medically necessary. This information does not represent a guarantee of coverage or payment.

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