

Clinical Policy: Biofeedback

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[Coding Implications](#)

[Revision Log](#)

Description

Biofeedback therapy provides visual, auditory or other evidence of the status of certain body functions so that a person can exert voluntary control over the functions, and thereby alleviate an abnormal bodily condition. Biofeedback therapy often uses electrical devices to transform bodily signals indicative of such functions as heart rate, blood pressure, skin temperature, salivation, peripheral vasomotor activity, and gross muscle tone into a tone or light, the loudness or brightness of which shows the extent of activity in the function being measured.¹

Note: For neurofeedback for behavioral health conditions, refer to *PA.CP.BH.300 Neurofeedback for Behavioral Health Conditions*.

Policy/Criteria

- I. It is the policy of PA Health and Wellness® (PHW) that biofeedback is **medically necessary** when the basic and treatment-specific criteria in A and B are met.

Reconsideration of medical necessity should be made if more than 14 biofeedback treatments sessions in a 12-month period are necessary.

A. Basic Criteria - meets all of the following:

1. The individual is motivated to actively participate in the treatment plan and agrees to the plan of care requirements (e.g., practice and follow-through at home);
 - a. If a child, support and guidance are available for fulfillment of the plan of care, (e.g., practice and follow-through at home);
2. The individual is capable of participating in the treatment plan (physically as well as intellectually);
3. There is a readily identifiable and measurable response;
4. Biofeedback training is performed by a physician or qualified non-physician practitioner which can include physical and occupational therapists, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and clinical nurse specialists;

B. Treatment-Specific Criteria - meets any of the following:

1. Stress, urge, or mixed urinary incontinence in adult members/enrollees who have or previously had a female reproductive system, with no cognitive impairments that would limit participation, and who have failed a documented four week trial of pelvic muscle exercise training (Kegel exercises);
2. Dysfunctional voiding in children, when other alternative options have been unsuccessful (e.g., timed voiding, prophylactic antibacterial therapy for recurrent urinary tract infections, short term anticholinergic medications to assist developing a normal voiding pattern);
3. Fecal incontinence and all of the following:
 - a. One of the following:
 - i. Anorectal manometry demonstrates weakness of the external anal sphincter;

- ii. Decreased ability to perceive rectal distension because of nerve injury;
 - b. None of the following contraindications:
 - i. Isolated internal anal sphincter weakness;
 - ii. Overflow incontinence associated with behavioral or psychiatric disorders;
 - iii. Neurological disorders associated with substantial loss of rectal sensation and/or the inability to contract the external anal sphincter;
 - iv. Decreased rectal storage capacity from resection, inflammation, or fibrosis;
 - v. Suspected or established major structural damage to continence mechanisms;
4. Chronic constipation in patients with organic neuromuscular impairment who have difficulty with outlet obstruction;
5. Thermal biofeedback combined with relaxation training or electromyography (EMG) biofeedback as treatment options in management of tension and migraine headaches;
6. Chronic pain as part of a rehabilitation program;
7. Muscle re-education of specific muscle groups or for treating pathological muscle abnormalities of spasticity, incapacitating muscle spasm (including pain due to spasm), or weakness when more conventional treatments (heat, cold, massage, exercise, support) have not been successful.

II. It is the policy of PHW that there is insufficient evidence to draw conclusions regarding the efficacy of biofeedback for any other circumstances than those specified above.

****** It is the policy of PA Health & Wellness[®] (PHW) that determinations for services that are considered **not medically necessary** must be considered on a case-by-case basis by a physician or ad hoc committee and must be made in accordance with the Benefit Plan Contract provisions and applicable state and federal requirements. Denials will require medical director review.

Background

The three most commonly used forms of biofeedback therapy are: (1) electromyography (EMG), which measures muscle tension; (2) thermal biofeedback, which measures skin temperature; and (3) neurofeedback or electroencephalography (EEG), which measures brain wave activity. Various forms of biofeedback appear to be effective for a narrow range of health problems.

First line treatment of urinary incontinence (stress, urgency, mixed) consists of behavioral treatments with an emphasis on improving quality of life. Initial treatment includes lifestyle modifications and pelvic floor muscle exercise (Kegel exercises). Biofeedback is used as an adjunct to pelvic floor muscle exercises. By providing individuals with concurrent feedback on muscle tone, biofeedback is intended to improve the patient's ability to perform pelvic muscle exercises. Augmented versions also use abdominal and perineal EMG recordings to demonstrate improper contraction of abdominal and gluteal muscles. A systematic review and meta-analysis of 17 randomized or quasi-randomized trials found that compared with women who received pelvic floor muscle exercises alone, those that also received biofeedback were more likely to report improvement or cure of urinary incontinence.¹

Dysfunctional voiding in children is a learned behavior of abnormal urination, which often evolves from attempts to suppress impending or active bladder contractions by inappropriately

CLINICAL POLICY

Biofeedback

contracting the pelvic floor muscles, thereby tightening the urinary sphincter complex. Symptoms vary, but daytime wetness and urinary tract infections are common.² Other urinary symptoms include urgency, frequency, infrequency, and constipation. Usual care of dysfunctional voiding includes voiding on a schedule and keeping voiding diaries. Kegel or pelvic floor exercises may help children gain conscious control of pelvic floor musculature and urination.³ Biofeedback teaches children how to identify and control the muscle groups involved in voiding. It is reserved for children with dysfunctional voiding despite an adequate trial of conservative therapy and/or pharmacotherapy. Available studies suggest that biofeedback-directed pelvic floor exercises can improve urinary function in dysfunctional voiding, including those who have previously failed conservative treatment. Biofeedback therapy may result in a faster resolution of symptoms than traditional pelvic floor training without biofeedback.²

Biofeedback therapy improves symptoms in more than 70% of patients with defecatory disorders. Biofeedback can be useful in the treatment of constipation to train patients to relax their pelvic floor muscles during straining and to correlate relaxation and pushing to achieve defecation. By the relearning process, the non-relaxing pelvic floor is gradually suppressed and normal coordination restored. Biofeedback has been shown to improve recto anal coordination during defecation and symptoms of constipation despite reduced laxative use. Biofeedback is also used in the treatment of fecal incontinence.⁴

American Gastroenterological Association (AGA)

The AGA states that pelvic floor retraining by biofeedback therapy rather than laxatives is recommended for defecatory disorders (strong recommendation, high-quality evidence).³ Instrumented anorectal biofeedback therapy should be used to manage symptoms in defecatory disorders (strong recommendation; minimal risk of harm; quality of evidence: moderate).⁵

American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons (ASCRS)

The 2023 updated ASCRS clinical practice guidelines for the management of fecal incontinence state that biofeedback may be considered for patients with fecal incontinence (conditional recommendation; quality of evidence: low). The guidelines state that biofeedback is a noninvasive option for patients with fecal incontinence “who have not responded adequately to other conservative measures. The updated guidelines report that nonrandomized, prospective and retrospective studies show 64% to 89% improvement in fecal incontinence with biofeedback, but there are methodological weaknesses with a number of the smaller studies. These study weaknesses, along with randomized controlled trials comparing biofeedback to other treatment options but not to sham therapy, make it difficult to determine a definitive conclusion on the utility of biofeedback. The ASCRS states that in order to determine the efficacy of biofeedback for fecal incontinence, larger, well-designed studies are needed.³

American Academy of Neurology (AAN)

The AAN recommends relaxation training, thermal biofeedback combined with relaxation training, EMG biofeedback, and cognitive-behavioral therapy as treatment options for prevention of migraine (Grade A). Specific recommendations regarding which of these to use for specific patients cannot be made.⁶

Coding Implications

CLINICAL POLICY

Biofeedback



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CPT® Codes	Description
90901	Biofeedback training by any modality
90912	Biofeedback training, perineal muscles, anorectal or urethral sphincter, including EMG and/or manometry, when performed; initial 15 minutes of one-on-one physician or other qualified health care professional contact with the patient
90913	Biofeedback training, perineal muscles, anorectal or urethral sphincter, including EMG and/or manometry, when performed; each additional 15 minutes of one-on-one physician or other qualified health care professional contact with the patient (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)

Reviews, Revisions, and Approvals	Revision Date	Approval Date
References reviewed and updated.	06/18	
Removed information note that improvement of fecal/urinary incontinence should be noted in 4 sessions. Removed criteria point under I.A stating including being responsive to care plan requirements and the condition can be appropriately treated with biofeedback. Added child specific sub item point under I.A.1. Codes reviewed	10/19	
References reviewed and updated. Removed CPT 90911 – code deleted 1/1/2020. Replaced with 2020 CPT codes, 90912 and 90913. Removed I.B.5 “Anal muscle abnormalities of spasticity, incapacitating muscle spasm, and/or muscle weakness” as duplicative and revised language in I.B.3. Added contraindications to I.B.3.b.	06/2020	
Annual Review completed. In II, replaced “experimental /investigational” language with the statement that there is insufficient evidence to draw conclusions regarding the efficacy of biofeedback for any other circumstances than those specified above. Added note to refer to CP.BH.300 Neurofeedback for behavioral health conditions. Updated background with no impact on criteria. Changed “review date” in the header to “date of last revision” and “date” in the revision log header to “revision date.” References reviewed, updated and reformatted. Reviewed by specialist.	7/29/2022	

Reviews, Revisions, and Approvals	Revision Date	Approval Date
Annual review. In I.B.1. changed “female” to “members/enrollees who have or previously had a female reproductive system” and reworded “cognitively intact” to “no cognitive impairments that would limit participation”. ICD-10 code table removed. Minor rewording in Criteria I.B.1. Background updated to reflect 2023 updated clinical practice guidelines from the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons with no impact on criteria. References reviewed and updated. Fecal incontinence criteria reviewed by internal specialist. Policy reviewed by external specialist.	11/2023	

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