Clinical Policy: Hyperhidrosis Treatments

Reference Number: PA.CP.MP.62
Plan Effective Date: 01/2018
Date of Last Revision: 12/2024

Coding Implications
Revision Log

Description
Hyperhidrosis is defined as excessive sweating beyond a level required to maintain normal body temperature in response to heat exposure or exercise.

Please refer to the following:

- *PA.CP.PMN.177 Glycopyrronium (Qbrexza)*
- *PHW.PDL.236 Botulinum Toxins*

Policy/Criteria

I. It is the policy of PA Health and Wellness® (PHW) that treatment with iontophoresis (electrophoresis, Drionic device) is **medically necessary** when *all* of the following criteria are met:

A. Diagnosis of primary hyperhidrosis;
B. Development of medical complications, such as skin maceration with secondary skin infections *or* has a significant constant disruption of professional and/or social life (e.g., recurrent changing of clothes, affecting job/social function, etc.) which has occurred because of excessive sweating;
C. Unresponsive or unable to tolerate at least one of the pharmacotherapies prescribed for excessive sweating (e.g., anticholinergics, beta-blockers, or benzodiazepines);
D. Failed a six-month trial of conservative management including the adherent application of aluminum chloride hexahydrate [Drysol by prescription], or topical agents have resulted in a severe rash;
E. Has none of the following contraindications:
    1. Cardiac pacemaker;
    2. Cardiac arrhythmias;
    3. Pregnancy (hyperhidrosis often improves during pregnancy);
    4. Metal implants, depending on size and position (may divert the electric current);
    5. Epilepsy.

II. It is the policy of PHW® that surgical excision of axillary sweat glands for axillary hyperhidrosis are **medically necessary** when *all* of the following criteria are met:

A. Meets all of the iontophoresis criteria in I.A. through I.E.;
B. Has persistent and severe primary hyperhidrosis;
C. Has failed one of the following:
    1. Iontophoresis;
    2. Trial of botulinum toxin.

III. It is the policy of PHW that endoscopic thoracic sympathectomy (ETS) for palmar or palmar and axillary hyperhidrosis is **medically necessary** when *all* of the following criteria are met:

A. Meets all of the iontophoresis criteria in I.A. through I.E.;
B. Member/enrollee has a resting heart rate > 55 beats per minute;

C. Hyperhidrosis symptoms started at an early age (usually < 16 years), and surgery is requested for a young member/enrollee (usually < 25 years of age);
D. Body mass index < 28;
E. Reports no sweating during sleep;
F. Member/enrollee has no significant comorbidities;
G. Member/enrollee has persistent and severe primary hyperhidrosis;
H. Member/enrolle has failed one of the following:
    1. Iontophoresis;
    2. Trial of botulinum toxin for predominantly axillary hyperhidrosis;
I. Member/enrollee has been counseled on risks of procedure.

Note: The standard line of medical therapy is:
1. Drysol, then Botox or topical glycopyrronium for axillary hyperhidrosis;
2. Drysol, then iontophoresis for palmoplantar hyperhidrosis;
3. Third-line therapies such as iontophoresis and surgery for axillary hyperhidrosis, and Botox and surgery for palmoplantar hyperhidrosis.

IV. There is insufficient evidence in the published peer reviewed literature to support all other treatments for hyperhidrosis, including, but not limited to, microwave therapy, or liposuction as the sole method of removing axillary sweat glands.

Background

Hyperhidrosis can be classified as either primary or secondary.[1] Primary focal hyperhidrosis is idiopathic in nature and is defined as excessive sweating induced by sympathetic hyperactivity in selected areas that is not associated with an underlying disease process.[2] The most common locations are underarms (axillary hyperhidrosis), hands (palmar hyperhidrosis), and feet (plantar hyperhidrosis). Primary focal hyperhidrosis is a condition that is characterized by visible, excessive sweating of at least six months' duration without apparent cause. Hyperhidrosis can ruin clothing, produce emotional distress, and lead to occupational disability.[1]

Secondary hyperhidrosis can result from a variety of drugs, such as tricyclic antidepressants, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), or underlying diseases/conditions, such as febrile diseases, diabetes mellitus, or menopause. Secondary hyperhidrosis is usually generalized or craniofacial sweating. Secondary gustatory hyperhidrosis is excessive sweating on ingesting highly spiced foods. This trigeminovascular reflex typically occurs symmetrically on scalp or face and predominately over the forehead, lips, and nose. Secondary facial gustatory sweating, in contrast, is usually asymmetrical and occurs independently of the nature of the ingested food. This phenomenon frequently occurs after injury or surgery in the region of the parotid gland.

A variety of therapies have been investigated for primary hyperhidrosis, including topical therapy with aluminum chloride, iontophoresis, intradermal injections of botulinum toxin type A, endoscopic transthoracic sympathectomy (ETS), and surgical excision of axillary sweat glands.[1,3,4] ETS is an invasive procedure intended to arrest the symptoms of hyperhidrosis and involves interrupting the upper thoracic sympathetic chain through clipping, cauterization, or cutting.[1] ETS is considered a last resort due to potential serious, irreversible compensatory sweating (excessive sweating on large areas of the body or all over), as well as other effects,

such as extreme hypotension, arrhythmia, and heat intolerance.[5] Treatment of secondary hyperhidrosis focuses on the treatment of the underlying cause, such as discontinuing certain drugs or hormone replacement therapy as a treatment of menopausal symptoms.

Microwave energy has been proposed for the treatment of primary axillary hyperhidrosis. The miraDry System (Mirimar Labs, Inc) is a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved device indicated for treatment of primary axillary hyperhidrosis. It is not indicated for treating hyperhidrosis related to other body areas or generalized hyperhidrosis. According to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), "Current evidence on the safety and efficacy of transcutaneous microwave ablation for severe primary axillary hyperhidrosis is inadequate in quantity and quality. Therefore, this procedure should only be used with special arrangements for clinical governance, consent and audit or research. NICE encourages further research into transcutaneous microwave ablation for severe primary axillary hyperhidrosis and may update the guidance on publication of further evidence."[6]

Coding Implications

This clinical policy references Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®). CPT® is a registered trademark of the American Medical Association. All CPT codes and descriptions are copyrighted 2023, American Medical Association. All rights reserved. CPT codes and CPT descriptions are from the current manuals and those included herein are not intended to be all inclusive and are included for informational purposes only. Codes referenced in this clinical policy are for informational purposes only. Inclusion or exclusion of any codes does not guarantee coverage. Providers should reference the most up to date sources of professional coding guidance prior to the submission of claims for reimbursement of covered services.

CPT® Codes	Description
11450	Excision of skin and subcutaneous tissue for hidradenitis, axillary; with simple or intermediate repair
11451	Excision of skin and subcutaneous tissue for hidradenitis, axillary; with complex repair
15877*	Suction assisted lipectomy; trunk
15878*	Suction assisted lipectomy; upper extremity
32664	Thoracoscopy, surgical; with thoracic sympathectomy
97024	Application of a modality to 1 or more areas; diathermy (eg, microwave)
97033	Application of a modality to 1 or more areas; iontophoresis, each 15 minutes

* Insufficient evidence in published peer-reviewed literature to support suction assisted liposuction or diathermy as the sole method of removing axillary sweat glands.

Revisions, and Approvals	Date	Approval Date
Separated criteria for ETS and removal of axillary sweat glands, and specified that they meet criteria for iontophoresis A-D. For ETS, added criteria that member heart rate is ≥ 55 beats per minute, symptoms started before 16 years of age, and surgery is on a member less than 25 years of age, that there be no significant comorbidities, that there is no night sweating, and BMI < 28, per 2011 guidelines.	06/18	

Revisions, and Approvals	Date	Approval Date
Added topical glycopyrronium to normal line of medical therapy for axillary hyperhidrosis, in the note under III. References reviewed and updated.	03/19	
Removed informational codes for chemical denervation of sweat glands: 64560, 64563. Added codes 11450 and 11451. Section IV: Added liposuction as the sole method of removing axillary sweat glands as investigational. Specialist reviewed.	12/2020	2/9/2021
Combined criteria points in II. H. and III. C to read "failed one of the following: 1. Iontophoresis or 2. Trial of botulinum toxin." References reviewed and updated. Specialist reviewed.	10/2021	
Annual review. References reviewed and updated. Reviewed by specialist. Changed "Last Review Date" in the header to "Date of Last Revision" and "Date" in revision log to "Revision Date". "Experimental/investigational" verbiage replaced in policy statement and background with descriptive language. Updated reference to CP.PHAR.09 to CP.PHAR.230 and CP.PHAR.232 as well as CP.PMN.117 to CP.PMN.177. Updated Criteria II.B. to greater than 55 beats per minute. Removed "is relatively healthy" in criteria II.F. Background updated with no impact on criteria. ICD-10 codes removed. Minor rewording of pharmacy policy title (in description). Changed order of criteria. Added criteria point III.I. regarding counseling on risks. Background updated with no clinical significance. Removed CPT codes 64802 through 64823. References reviewed and updated. Reviewed by external specialist.	01/2024	03/2024
Annual review. Added note regarding the normal line of medical therapy back into policy after erroneously removing during January 2024 annual policy review. Two previously referenced Pharmacy policies were combined into one and replaced under Description (References). Removed previous Criteria I.E.5. regarding cracked skin near the treatment area. Added epilepsy to Criteria I.E.5. Minor grammatical update in Criteria II. Updated Criteria II.A. to include through Criteria I.E. Minor grammatical update in Criteria III. Updated Criteria III.A. to include through Criteria I.E. Updated verbiage in Criteria III.B., Criteria III.F., Criteria III.G., Criteria III.H., and Criteria III.I. with no impact to criteria. Updated verbiage in Note section at the end of Criteria III. with no impact to criteria. Minor verbiage update in Criteria IV. Background updated with no impact to criteria. Added diathermy to notation at end of coding section regarding insufficient evidence in the peer-reviewed literature. References reviewed and updated. Reviewed by external specialist.	12/2024	

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