

Clinical Policy: Hyperhidrosis Treatments

Reference Number: PA.CP.MP.62

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[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.PHAR.230 AbobotulinumtoxinA (Dysport)
- PA.CP.PHAR.232 OnabotulinumtoxinA (Botox)
- PA.CP.PMN.177 Glycopyrronium (Qbrexza)

Policy/Criteria

- I. It is the policy of Pennsylvania 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. Cracked skin near the treatment area.

- 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 D.;
 - B. Has persistent and severe primary hyperhidrosis;
 - C. Has failed one of the following:
 1. Iontophoresis;
 2. Trial of botulinum toxin.

□

Note: The normal line of medical therapy is:

1. Drysol, then botox for axillary hyperhidrosis

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2. Drysol, then iontophoresis for palmoplantar hyperhidrosis
3. Other treatments are third-line therapies (iontophoresis and surgery for axillary hyperhidrosis, and Botox and surgery for palmoplantar hyperhidrosis).

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 D.;
- B. 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. The member/enrollee has no significant comorbidities;
- G. Has persistent and severe primary hyperhidrosis;
- H. Has failed one of the following:
 1. Iontophoresis;
 2. Trial of botulinum toxin for predominantly axillary hyperhidrosis;
- I. The member/enrollee has been counseled on risks of procedure.

IV. There is insufficient evidence in 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 are considered **investigational and not medically necessary**.

Background

Hyperhidrosis can be classified as either primary or secondary.¹² 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.³ 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.¹²

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 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, and surgical excision of axillary sweat glands.^{1,2,12}

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Endoscopic thoracic sympathectomy (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.¹² 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, i.e. extreme hypotension, arrhythmia, and heat intolerance.¹⁸ 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.

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 as the sole method of removing axillary sweat glands.

Reviews, 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	

Reviews, 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	

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