MEDICAL POLICY – 7.01.130
Axial Lumbosacral Interbody Fusion

BCBSA Ref. Policy: 7.01.130
Effective Date: July 1, 2017
Last Revised: June 6, 2017
Replaces: N/A

RELATED MEDICAL POLICIES:
7.01.107 Interspinous and Interlaminar Stabilization/Distraction Devices (Spacers)
7.01.120 Facet Arthroplasty
7.01.138 Interspinous Fixation (Fusion) Devices
7.01.542 Lumbar Fusion
7.01.551 Lumbar Spine Decompression Surgery: Discectomy, Foraminotomy, Laminotomy, Laminectomy

Select a hyperlink below to be directed to that section.

POLICY CRITERIA | CODING | RELATED INFORMATION
EVIDENCE REVIEW | REFERENCES | HISTORY

∞ Clicking this icon returns you to the hyperlinks menu above.

Introduction

Fusing the bones at the lowest part of the back may be one choice to treat lower back (lumbar) pain. When this kind of fusion is needed, it’s usually done by making an opening (an incision) through the back muscles and other tissue. In axial lumbar interbody fusion, the incision is made in the buttock. A tube, long enough to reach the spine, is inserted upwards along a specific path. Special tools are then threaded through the tube to reach the disc that sits between the bones. The surgeon cuts way the damaged disk and removes it through the tube. The tube also guides the path to place bone graft material and a small implant in the area where the disc was removed. The graft material promotes bone growth, and over time the two bones grow together and are permanently joined. Because more studies are needed to determine the risks and benefits of this procedure compared to other methods of lumbar fusion, this service is considered unproven (investigational).

Note: The Introduction section is for your general knowledge and is not to be taken as policy coverage criteria. The rest of the policy uses specific words and concepts familiar to medical professionals. It is intended for providers. A provider can be a person, such as a doctor, nurse, psychologist, or dentist. A provider also can be a place where medical care is given, like a hospital, clinic, or lab. This policy informs them about when a service may be covered.
Policy Coverage Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Investigational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Axial lumbosacral interbody fusion (axial LIF)</td>
<td>Axial lumbosacral interbody fusion (axial LIF) is considered investigational.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0195T</td>
<td>Arthrodesis, pre-sacral interbody technique, disc space preparation, discectomy, without instrumentation, with image guidance, includes bone graft when performed; L5-S1 interspace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0196T</td>
<td>Arthrodesis, pre-sacral interbody technique, disc space preparation, discectomy, without instrumentation, with image guidance, includes bone graft when performed; L4-L5 interspace (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0309T</td>
<td>Arthrodesis, pre-sacral interbody technique, including disc space preparation, discectomy, with posterior instrumentation, with image guidance, includes bone graft, when performed, lumbar, L4-L5 interspace (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22586</td>
<td>Arthrodesis, pre-sacral interbody technique, including disc space preparation, discectomy, with posterior instrumentation, with image guidance, includes bone graft when performed, L5-S1 interspace.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Related Information

N/A
Description

Axial lumbosacral interbody fusion (LIF; also called pre-sacral, trans-sacral or paracoccygeal interbody fusion) is a minimally invasive technique designed to provide anterior access to the L4-L5-S1 disc spaces for interbody fusion, while minimizing damage to muscular, ligamentous, neural, and vascular structures. It is performed under fluoroscopic guidance.

Background

Interbody fusion is a surgical procedure that fuses 2 adjacent vertebral bodies of the spine. Lumbar interbody fusion may be performed in patients with spinal stenosis and instability, spondylolisthesis, scoliosis, following disectomy, or for adjacent-level disc disease. Axial lumbosacral interbody fusion (LIF; also called presacral, transsacral, or paracoccygeal interbody fusion) is a minimally invasive technique designed to provide anterior access to the L4-L5-S1 disc spaces for interbody fusion, while minimizing damage to muscular, ligamentous, neural, and vascular structures. It is performed under fluoroscopic guidance. The procedure for 1-level axial LIF (L5-S1) is as follows¹: Under fluoroscopic monitoring, a blunt guide pin introducer is passed through a 15- to 20-mm incision lateral to the coccyx and advanced along the midline of the anterior surface of the sacrum. A guide pin is introduced and tapped into the sacrum. A series of graduated dilators are advanced over the guide pin, and a dilator sheath attached to the last dilator is left in place to serve as a working channel for the passage of instruments. A cannulated drill is passed over the guide pin into the L5-S1 disc space to rest on the inferior endplate of L5. It is followed by cutters alternating with tissue extractors, and the nucleus pulposus is debulked under fluoroscopic guidance. Next, bone graft material is injected to fill the disc space. The threaded rod is placed over the guide pin and advanced through the sacrum into L5. The implant is designed to distract the vertebral bodies and restore disc and neural foramen height. Additional graft material is injected into the rod, where it enters into the disc space through holes in the axial rod. A rod plug is then inserted to fill the cannulation of the axial rod. Percutaneous placement of pedicle or facet screws may be used to provide supplemental fixation.

An advantage of axial LIF is that it allows preservation of the annulus and all paraspinous soft tissue structures. However, there is an increased need for fluoroscopy and an inability to address
intracanal pathology or visualize the discectomy procedure directly. Complications of the axial approach may include perforation of the bowel and injury to blood vessels and/or nerves.

**Summary of Evidence**

The evidence for axial lumbosacral interbody fusion (LIF) in individuals who have degenerative spine disease at the L4-L5-S1 disc spaces includes comparative systematic review of case series and 1 retrospective comparative study. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, functional outcomes, quality of life, and treatment-related morbidity. The systematic review found that fusion rates were higher following transforaminal LIF than following axial LIF, although this difference decreased with use of bone morphogenetic protein or pedicle screws. The findings of this systematic review were limited by the lack of prospective comparative studies and differences in how fusion rates were determined. Studies suggest that complication rates may also be increased with 2-level axial LIF. Controlled trials with clinical outcome measures are needed to better define the benefits and risks of this procedure compared with treatment alternatives. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

**Ongoing and Unpublished Clinical Trials**

Some currently unpublished trials that might influence this review are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1. Summary of Key Trials**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NCT No.</th>
<th>Trial Name</th>
<th>Planned Enrollment</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unpublished</td>
<td>RAMP Study: A Prospective Randomized Study Comparing Two Lumbar Fusion Procedures</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>July 2017 Terminated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NCT: national clinical trial.

* Denotes industry-sponsored or cosponsored trial.
Clinical Input Received from Physician Specialty Societies and Academic Medical Centers

While the various physician specialty societies and academic medical centers may provide appropriate reviewers who collaborate with and make recommendations during this process, input received does not represent an endorsement or position statement by the physician specialty societies or academic medical centers, unless otherwise noted.

In response to requests, input was received from 2 specialty medical societies and 3 academic medical centers while this policy was under review in 2011. The input considered axial LIF to be investigational.

Practice Guidelines and Position Statements

North American Spine Society

The North American Spine Society (NASS) published a guideline on the treatment of degenerative spondylolisthesis in 2014. NASS gave a Grade B recommendation for surgical decompression with fusion in patients with spinal stenosis and spondylolisthesis. The guideline discussed posterolateral fusion, 360° fusion, and minimally invasive fusion, but did not address axial LIF.

American Association of Neurological Surgeons

The American Association of Neurological Surgeons published guidelines for interbody techniques for lumbar fusion in 2014 (part 11). The 2014 guideline states that there is no evidence that conflicts with the previous recommendations of the first generation of lumbar fusion guidelines. There was insufficient evidence to recommend a treatment standard. Minimally invasive procedures were not reviewed.

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence

The United Kingdom’s National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) provided guidance on transaxial interbody fusion in the lumbar spine in 2011. The guidance states that current evidence on the efficacy of transaxial interbody lumbosacral fusion is limited in quantity
but shows symptom relief in the short term in some patients. Evidence on safety shows that there is a risk of rectal perforation. Therefore this procedure should only be used with special arrangements for clinical governance, consent, and audit or research. NICE encourages further research into transaxial interbody lumbosacral fusion. Research outcomes should include fusion rates, pain and functional scores, quality-of-life measures, and the frequency of both early and late complications.

**Medicare National Coverage**

There is no national coverage determination (NCD). In the absence of an NCD, coverage decisions are left to the discretion of local Medicare carriers.

**Regulatory Status**

The AxiaLIF® and AxiaLIF II Level systems (TranS1) consist of techniques and surgical instruments for creating a pre-sacral access route to perform percutaneous fusion of the L5–S1 or L4–S1 vertebral bodies. (In 2013, TranS1 acquired Baxano and changed the company name to Baxano Surgical. Quandry Medical acquired the TranS1 technology in 2014 and re-established distribution of AxiaLIF® in 2015). The instruments were cleared for marketing by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) through the 510(k) process to provide anterior stabilization of the spinal segments as an adjunct to spinal fusion and to assist in the treatment of degeneration of the lumbar disc; to perform lumbar discectomy; or to assist in the performance of interbody fusion.\(^2,3\) The AxiaLIF® systems are indicated for patients requiring fusion to treat pseudoarthrosis, unsuccessful previous fusion, spinal stenosis, Grade 1 or 2 spondylolisthesis, or degenerative disc disease, defined as back pain of discogenic origin with degeneration of the disc confirmed by history and radiographic studies. They are not intended to treat severe scoliosis, severe spondylolisthesis (Grades 3 and 4), tumor, or trauma. The devices are not meant to be used in patients with vertebral compression fractures or any other condition in which the mechanical integrity of the vertebral body is compromised. Their usage is limited to anterior supplemental fixation of the lumbar spine at L5–S1 or L4–S1 in conjunction with legally marketed facet or pedicle screw systems.

FDA product code: KWQ
References


History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02/27/12</td>
<td>Replace Policy – Policy Section on axial LIF moved from policy 7.01.542 (Minimally Invasive Lumbar Interbody Fusion) and updated with literature search through September 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>09/27/12</td>
<td>Update Coding Section – ICD-10 codes are now effective 10/01/2014.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/29/13</td>
<td>Replace policy. Policy updated with literature review through August 2012; references 7 and 8 added; one reference removed. Policy statement unchanged. CPT coding updated: CPT codes 22586 and 0309T, effective 1/1/13, added; descriptors changed for codes 0195T and 1096T.</td>
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<tr>
<td>09/30/13</td>
<td>Update Related Policies. Change title to 7.01.120.</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/21/14</td>
<td>Replace policy. Policy updated with literature review through September 30, 2013. Reference 5 added; others renumbered/removed. Policy statement unchanged. ICD-9 code 81.08 descriptor updated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/28/15</td>
<td>Annual Review. Policy updated with literature review through September 24, 2014; references 6, 13 added; policy statement unchanged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/01/15</td>
<td>Coding update. ICD-10 PCS codes added; these were inadvertently removed at last publication.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Scope**: Medical policies are systematically developed guidelines that serve as a resource for Company staff when determining coverage for specific medical procedures, drugs or devices. Coverage for medical services is subject to the limits and conditions of the member benefit plan. Members and their providers should consult the member benefit booklet or contact a customer service representative to determine whether there are any benefit limitations applicable to this service or supply. This medical policy does not apply to Medicare Advantage.
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- Information written in other languages

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PO Box 91102, Seattle, WA 98111
Toll free 855-332-4535, Fax 425-918-5592, TTY 800-842-5357
Email AppealsDepartmentInquiries@Premera.com

If you can file a grievance in person or by mail, fax, or email. If you need help filing a grievance, the Civil Rights Coordinator is available to help you.

You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, electronically through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, available at:
https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf, or by mail or phone at:
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW, Room S09F, HHH Building
Washington, D.C. 20201, 1-800-368-1019, 800-537-7697 (TDD)
Complaint forms are available at:

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