TRANSCUTANEOUS ELECTRICAL NERVE STIMULATION (TENS) FOR ACUTE POST-OPERATIVE PAIN (NCD 10.2)

**Guideline Number:** MPG314.04  
**Approval Date:** August 8, 2018

**Table of Contents**
- **Policy Summary**: 1 page
- **Purpose**: 1 page
- **References**: 2 pages
- **Guideline History/Revision Information**: 2 pages
- **Terms and Conditions**: 3 pages

**Related Medicare Advantage Policy Guidelines**
- Assessing Patient's Suitability for Electrical Nerve Stimulation Therapy (NCD 160.7.1)
- Supplies Used in the Delivery of Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) and Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation (NMES) (NCD 160.13)
- Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) for Chronic Low Back Pain (CLBP) (NCD 160.27)

**Related Medicare Advantage Coverage Summaries**
- Durable Medical Equipment (DME), Prosthetics, Corrective Appliances/Orthotics (Non-Foot Orthotics) and Medical Supplies Grid
- Pain Management and Pain Rehabilitation
- Stimulators: Electric and Spinal Cord Stimulators

**Policy Summary**

**Overview**
The use of Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) for the relief of acute post-operative pain is covered under Medicare. TENS may be covered whether used as an adjunct to the use of drugs, or as an alternative to drugs, in the treatment of acute pain resulting from surgery.

TENS devices, whether durable or disposable, may be used in furnishing this service. When used for the purpose of treating acute post-operative pain, TENS devices are considered supplies. As such they may be hospital supplies furnished inpatients covered under Part A, or supplies incident to a physician's service when furnished in connection with surgery done on an outpatient basis, and covered under Part B.

**Guidelines**
It is expected that TENS, when used for acute post-operative pain, will be necessary for relatively short periods of time, usually 30 days or less. In cases when TENS is used for longer periods, Medicare Administrative Contractors should attempt to ascertain whether TENS is no longer being used for acute pain but rather for chronic pain, in which case the TENS device may be covered as durable medical equipment as described in NCD 160.27.

**Coding Clarification:** See NCD 160.27 Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) for Chronic Low Back Pain (CLBP) for coding information.

**Purpose**
The Medicare Advantage Policy Guideline documents are generally used to support UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage claims processing activities and facilitate providers’ submission of accurate claims for the specified services. The document can be used as a guide to help determine applicable:
- Medicare coding or billing requirements, and/or
- Medical necessity coverage guidelines; including documentation requirements.
UnitedHealthcare follows Medicare guidelines such as LCDs, NCDs, and other Medicare manuals for the purposes of determining coverage. It is expected providers retain or have access to appropriate documentation when requested to support coverage. Please utilize the links in the References section below to view the Medicare source materials used to develop this resource document. This document is not a replacement for the Medicare source materials that outline Medicare coverage requirements. Where there is a conflict between this document and Medicare source materials, the Medicare source materials will apply.

REFERENCES

CMS National Coverage Determinations (NCDs)
NCD 10.2 Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) for Acute Post-Operative Pain
Reference NCDs: NCD 160.13 Supplies Used in the Delivery of Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) and Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation (NMES); NCD 160.27 Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) for Chronic Low Back Pain (CLBP); NCD 160.7.1 Assessing Patient’s Suitability for Electrical Nerve Stimulation Therapy

CMS Local Coverage Determinations (LCDs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LCD</th>
<th>DME</th>
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<tr>
<td>L33802(Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulators (TENS)) CGS</td>
<td>CGS: AL, AR, CO, FL, GA, IL, IN, KY, LA, MI, MN, MS, NC, NM, OH, OK, PR, SC, TN, TX, VA, WI, WV Noridian: AK, AS, AZ, CA, CT, DC, DE, GU, HI, IA, ID, KS, MA, MD, ME, MO, MP, MT, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NV, NY, OR, PA RI, SD, UT, VT, WA, WY</td>
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CMS Articles

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<td>A52520 Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulators (TENS) - Policy Article</td>
<td>CGS: AL, AR, CO, FL, GA, IL, IN, KY, LA, MI, MN, MS, NC, NM, OH, OK, PR, SC, TN, TX, VA, WI, WV Noridian: AK, AS, AZ, CA, CT, DC, DE, GU, HI, IA, ID, KS, MA, MD, ME, MO, MP, MT, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NV, NY, OR, PA RI, SD, UT, VT, WA, WY</td>
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CMS Benefit Policy Manual
Chapter 6; § 80 Rental and Purchase of Durable Medical Equipment
Chapter 15; § 110 Durable Medical Equipment - General

CMS Claims Processing Manual
Chapter 20; § 30.1.2 Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulator (TENS)

CMS Transmittals
Transmittal 1388, Change Request 8691, Dated 05/23/2014 (ICD-10 Conversion/Coding Infrastructure Revisions/ICD-9 Updates to National Coverage Determinations (NCDs)—Maintenance CR)
Transmittal 2511, Change Request 7836, Dated 08/03/2012 (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) for Chronic Low Back Pain (CLBP))
Transmittal 2605, Change Request 7836, Dated 11/30/2012 (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) for Chronic Low Back Pain (CLBP))

UnitedHealthcare Commercial Policies
Electrical Stimulation for the Treatment of Pain and Muscle Rehabilitation

MLN Matters
Article MM7836, Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) for Chronic Low Back Pain (CLBP)

Others
NCD 280.13 Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulators (TENS) NCD has been removed from the NCD manual and incorporated into NCD 160.27 Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) for Chronic Low Back Pain (CLBP).

GUIDELINE HISTORY/REVISION INFORMATION

Revisions to this summary document do not in any way modify the requirement that services be provided and documented in accordance with the Medicare guidelines in effect on the date of service in question.

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<tr>
<td>04/01/2019</td>
<td>• Reorganized policy template; relocated Terms and Conditions and Purpose section</td>
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<tr>
<td>08/08/2018</td>
<td>• Annual review</td>
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Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) for Acute Post-Operative Pain (NCD 10.2)

The Medicare Advantage Policy Guidelines are applicable to UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage Plans offered by UnitedHealthcare and its affiliates.

These Policy Guidelines are provided for informational purposes, and do not constitute medical advice. Treating physicians and healthcare providers are solely responsible for determining what care to provide to their patients. Members should always consult their physician before making any decisions about medical care.

Benefit coverage for health services is determined by the member specific benefit plan document* and applicable laws that may require coverage for a specific service. The member specific benefit plan document identifies which services are covered, which are excluded, and which are subject to limitations. In the event of a conflict, the member specific benefit plan document supersedes the Medicare Advantage Policy Guidelines.

Medicare Advantage Policy Guidelines are developed as needed, are regularly reviewed and updated, and are subject to change. They represent a portion of the resources used to support UnitedHealthcare coverage decision making. UnitedHealthcare may modify these Policy Guidelines at any time by publishing a new version of the policy on this website. Medicare source materials used to develop these guidelines include, but are not limited to, CMS National Coverage Determinations (NCDs), Local Coverage Determinations (LCDs), Medicare Benefit Policy Manual, Medicare Claims Processing Manual, Medicare Program Integrity Manual, Medicare Managed Care Manual, etc. The information presented in the Medicare Advantage Policy Guidelines is believed to be accurate and current as of the date of publication, and is provided on an "AS IS" basis. Where there is a conflict between this document and Medicare source materials, the Medicare source materials will apply.

You are responsible for submission of accurate claims. Medicare Advantage Policy Guidelines are intended to ensure that coverage decisions are made accurately based on the code or codes that correctly describe the health care services provided. UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage Policy Guidelines use Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®), Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), or other coding guidelines. References to CPT® or other sources are for definitional purposes only and do not imply any right to reimbursement or guarantee claims payment.

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*For more information on a specific member's benefit coverage, please call the customer service number on the back of the member ID card or refer to the Administrative Guide.