

Arthroscopy for Osteoarthritis of the Knee

Clinical Coverage Criteria

Overview

Osteoarthritis is a disease of the articular cartilage. When cartilage loss occurs there may ultimately come to be bone on bone contact. Changes in structures around the joint (muscles and tendons), fluid accumulation and bony overgrowth (e.g., osteophytes or bone spurs) can develop. Articular cartilage has limited potential for regeneration or repair. There is no cure for osteoarthritis.

Osteoarthritis can affect any synovial joint. When it involves the knee joint it can cause severe chronic pain, loss of mobility, and disability. Treatment is focused on education, physical and occupational therapy, weight transfer modalities, joint protection and pharmacologic therapy. Patients with severe symptomatic osteoarthritis and limitation in activities of daily living should be referred to an orthopedic surgeon for evaluation. Knee joint replacement (knee arthroplasty) provides marked pain relief and functional improvement in the majority of patients with osteoarthritis of the knee. Prosthetic implants have a limited life expectancy depending upon an individual's age, weight, activity level and medical condition. Revision arthroplasty is difficult and outcomes of revision arthroplasty are not comparable to outcomes for primary arthroplasty.

Arthroscopy is a minimally invasive procedure that allows direct visualization of the interior of a joint. Knee arthroscopy allows orthopedic surgeons to assess - and in some cases, treat - a range of conditions affecting the knee joint. Reconstruction of the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and repair of a torn meniscus are among the most commonly performed arthroscopic surgeries. Injuries to both the ACL and the menisci are common, particularly in young athletes. (Torn menisci are also seen in older patients as the result of degeneration.) Arthroscopic lavage and arthroscopic debridement have been proposed as options for patients with osteoarthritis of the knee to reduce pain and improve function, postponing knee joint replacement.

1. Arthroscopic lavage or “washout” consists of flushing the knee joint with up to 10 liters of fluid. Any intraarticular debris is washed out through arthroscopic cannulas. In contrast to arthroscopic debridement, no instruments are used to mechanically debride or remove intraarticular tissue.
2. Arthroscopic debridement may include low volume lavage. Debridement is a general term which is used to cover many arthroscopic procedures including partial synovectomy, decompression and resection of plicae/adipose tissue, partial menisectomy, chondroplasty, removal of loose bodies, and/or osteophyte removal.

Policy

Fallon Health's Technology Assessment Committee has concluded that the scientific evidence has not shown that arthroscopy improves outcomes for patients with osteoarthritis of the knee. Randomized controlled studies demonstrating a clinically significant advantage for arthroscopy would be necessary to refute these results, which show equivalence between arthroscopy a control group.

Fallon Health does not cover arthroscopy for the treatment of osteoarthritis of the knee because this procedure has not been shown to improve patient outcomes, specifically reduction in knee pain or improvement of knee function when compared to a control group.

Exclusions

- Fallon Health excludes arthroscopy to treat the diagnosis of osteoarthritis of the knee.

Codes

This policy is not intended to address arthroscopy for other medically necessary indications, such as in the presence of infection, for the removal of loose or foreign bodies, or for the repair of a symptomatic torn ACL and/or meniscus. Claims for arthroscopy of the knee (CPT Codes 29870-29887 or 29999) submitted with osteoarthritis corresponding ICD-10-CM codes listed below as the primary diagnosis will be denied with the following disposition: Deny Vendor Liable.

ICD-10-CM

M15.0	Primary generalized (osteo)arthritis
M15.1	Heberden's nodes (with arthropathy)
M15.2	Bouchard's nodes (with arthropathy)
M15.3	Secondary multiple arthritis
M15.4	Erosive (osteo)arthritis
M15.8	Other polyosteoarthritis
M15.9	Polyosteoarthritis, unspecified
M16.0	Bilateral primary osteoarthritis of hip
M16.10	Unilateral primary osteoarthritis, unspecified hip
M16.11	Unilateral primary osteoarthritis, right hip
M16.12	Unilateral primary osteoarthritis, left hip
M16.2	Bilateral osteoarthritis resulting from hip dysplasia
M16.30	Unilateral osteoarthritis resulting from hip dysplasia, unspecified hip
M16.31	Unilateral osteoarthritis resulting from hip dysplasia, right hip
M16.32	Unilateral osteoarthritis resulting from hip dysplasia, left hip
M16.4	Bilateral post-traumatic osteoarthritis of hip
M16.50	Unilateral post-traumatic osteoarthritis, unspecified hip
M16.51	Unilateral post-traumatic osteoarthritis, right hip
M16.52	Unilateral post-traumatic osteoarthritis, left hip
M16.6	Other bilateral secondary osteoarthritis of hip
M16.7	Other unilateral secondary osteoarthritis of hip
M16.9	Osteoarthritis of hip, unspecified
M17.0	Bilateral primary osteoarthritis of knee
M17.10	Unilateral primary osteoarthritis, unspecified knee
M17.11	Unilateral primary osteoarthritis, right knee
M17.12	Unilateral primary osteoarthritis, left knee
M17.2	Bilateral post-traumatic osteoarthritis of knee
M17.30	Unilateral post-traumatic osteoarthritis, unspecified knee
M17.31	Unilateral post-traumatic osteoarthritis, right knee
M17.32	Unilateral post-traumatic osteoarthritis, left knee

M17.4	Other bilateral secondary osteoarthritis of knee
M17.5	Other unilateral secondary osteoarthritis of knee
M17.9	Osteoarthritis of knee, unspecified
M18.0	Bilateral primary osteoarthritis of first carpometacarpal joints
M18.10	Unilateral primary osteoarthritis of first carpometacarpal joint, unspecified hand
M18.11	Unilateral primary osteoarthritis of first carpometacarpal joint, right hand
M18.12	Unilateral primary osteoarthritis of first carpometacarpal joint, left hand
M18.52	Other unilateral secondary osteoarthritis of first carpometacarpal joint, left hand
M18.9	Osteoarthritis of first carpometacarpal joint, unspecified
M19.011	Primary osteoarthritis, right shoulder
M19.012	Primary osteoarthritis, left shoulder
M19.019	Primary osteoarthritis, unspecified shoulder
M19.021	Primary osteoarthritis, right elbow
M19.022	Primary osteoarthritis, left elbow
M19.029	Primary osteoarthritis, unspecified elbow
M19.031	Primary osteoarthritis, right wrist
M19.032	Primary osteoarthritis, left wrist
M19.039	Primary osteoarthritis, unspecified wrist
M19.041	Primary osteoarthritis, right hand
M19.042	Primary osteoarthritis, left hand
M19.049	Primary osteoarthritis, unspecified hand
M19.071	Primary osteoarthritis, right ankle and foot
M19.072	Primary osteoarthritis, left ankle and foot
M19.079	Primary osteoarthritis, unspecified ankle and foot
M19.111	Post-traumatic osteoarthritis, right shoulder
M19.112	Post-traumatic osteoarthritis, left shoulder
M19.119	Post-traumatic osteoarthritis, unspecified shoulder
M19.121	Post-traumatic osteoarthritis, right elbow
M19.122	Post-traumatic osteoarthritis, left elbow
M19.129	Post-traumatic osteoarthritis, unspecified elbow
M19.141	Post-traumatic osteoarthritis, right hand
M19.142	Post-traumatic osteoarthritis, left hand
M19.149	Post-traumatic osteoarthritis, unspecified hand
M19.171	Post-traumatic osteoarthritis, right ankle and foot
M19.172	Post-traumatic osteoarthritis, left ankle and foot
M19.179	Post-traumatic osteoarthritis, unspecified ankle and foot
M19.211	Secondary osteoarthritis, right shoulder
M19.212	Secondary osteoarthritis, left shoulder
M19.219	Secondary osteoarthritis, unspecified shoulder
M19.221	Secondary osteoarthritis, right elbow
M19.222	Secondary osteoarthritis, left elbow
M19.229	Secondary osteoarthritis, unspecified elbow
M19.231	Secondary osteoarthritis, right wrist
M19.232	Secondary osteoarthritis, left wrist
M19.239	Secondary osteoarthritis, unspecified wrist
M19.241	Secondary osteoarthritis, right hand
M19.242	Secondary osteoarthritis, left hand
M19.249	Secondary osteoarthritis, unspecified hand

M19.271	Secondary osteoarthritis, right ankle and foot
M19.272	Secondary osteoarthritis, left ankle and foot
M19.279	Secondary osteoarthritis, unspecified ankle and foot
M19.90	Unspecified osteoarthritis, unspecified site
M19.91	Primary osteoarthritis, unspecified site
M19.92	Post-traumatic osteoarthritis, unspecified site
M19.93	Secondary osteoarthritis, unspecified site

Code type	Code	Description
CPT	29870	Arthroscopy, knee, diagnostic, with or without synovial biopsy (separate procedure)
	29871	Arthroscopy, knee, surgical; for infection, lavage and drainage
	29873	Arthroscopy, knee, surgical; with lateral release
	29874	Arthroscopy, knee, surgical; for removal of loose body or foreign body (e.g., osteochondritis dissecans fragmentation, chondral fragmentation)
	29875	Arthroscopy, knee, surgical; synovectomy, limited (e.g., plica or shelf resection) (separate procedure)
	29876	Arthroscopy, knee, surgical; synovectomy, major, two or more compartments (e.g., medial or lateral)
	29877	Arthroscopy, knee, surgical; debridement/shaving of articular cartilage (chondroplasty)
	29879	Arthroscopy, knee, surgical; abrasion arthroplasty (includes chondroplasty where necessary) or multiple drilling or microfracture
HCPCS	G0289	Arthroscopy, knee, surgical, for removal of loose body, foreign body, debridement/shaving of articular cartilage (chondroplasty) at the time of other surgical knee arthroscopy in a different compartment of the same knee

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Policy History

Origination date:	05/01/2009
Approval(s):	Technology Assessment Subcommittee: 10/28/2008 2/26/2014 ICM codes mapped; 4/23/2014 correction due to ICD 10 CM implementation; 4/23/2014 currently not reimbursed separately for all lines of business, effective 7/1/2014 this service will deny vendor liable for all lines of business. Technology Assessment Committee: 01/13/2009, 03/26/2013, 10/22/2014 (updated language, references) 10/28/2015 (updated references), 10/26/2016 (removed ICD-9 codes), 10/25/2017 (annual review, no updates), 10/11/2018 (updated references)

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between this policy and a member's benefit plan, the provisions of the benefit plan will govern. However, applicable state mandates take precedence with respect to fully-insured plans and self-funded non-ERISA (e.g., government, school boards, church) plans. Unless otherwise specifically excluded, federal mandates will apply to all plans. For Medicare and Medicaid members, this policy will apply unless Medicare and Medicaid policies extend coverage beyond this policy.