

Diagnostic Spinal Ultrasonography (for Kentucky Only)

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[Instructions for Use](#)

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Related Policies
None

Application

This Medical Policy only applies to the state of Kentucky.

Coverage Rationale

Spinal ultrasonography is considered proven and medically necessary in certain circumstances. For medical necessity clinical coverage criteria, refer to the InterQual® CP: Imaging:

- Imaging, Spine, Cervical
- Imaging, Spine, Lumbar
- Imaging, Spine, Thoracic

Click [here](#) to view the InterQual® criteria.

Applicable Codes

The following list(s) of procedure and/or diagnosis codes is provided for reference purposes only and may not be all inclusive. Listing of a code in this policy does not imply that the service described by the code is a covered or non-covered health service. 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 inclusion of a code does not imply any right to reimbursement or guarantee claim payment. Other Policies and Guidelines may apply.

CPT Code	Description
76800	Ultrasound, spinal canal and contents

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Description of Services

Ultrasonography is a noninvasive imaging technique that relies on detection of the reflections or echoes generated as high-frequency sound waves are passed into the body. This technique is commonly used for a number of imaging purposes such as investigation of abdominal and pelvic masses, cardiac echocardiography, and prenatal fetal imaging. Less commonly, it has

also been applied to detection of spinal and paraspinal disorders. Ultrasonography of the spinal canal and its contents includes imaging of the spinal cord, the vertebrae, and the intervertebral discs.

Per the Radiological Society of North America, various tumors and disorders, especially neurological and vascular malformations, can be detected with spinal ultrasound (US). In newborns and infants up to six months of age, spinal cord lesions can be detected with US because the posterior elements are membranous rather than bony. Beyond this age, these elements calcify, reserving magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) for cases where spinal ultrasound is equivocal or has revealed a definite abnormality (Unsinn et al., 2000).

Spinal ultrasonography has also been used for investigation of neonatal spinal dysraphism, a disorder resulting from incomplete closure of the neural tube during gestation. This type of birth defect occurs in approximately 2 per 1000 live births, and the resulting spinal disorders include spinal agenesis, low cord, tethered cord, hydromyelia, diastematomyelia, myelocystocele, and myelomeningocele. Spinal ultrasonography may be used as the primary screening tool, reserving magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) for cases where spinal ultrasound is equivocal or has revealed a definite abnormality.

In adults, spinal ultrasonography has been used to investigate degenerative disc disease to determine whether back pain is a consequence of fissuring or herniation of the gelatinous discs that separate the vertebrae. Spinal ultrasound has also been used in the assessment of injuries to paraspinal ligaments after spinal fractures. Although ultrasonography has limited ability to reveal bone and tissues surrounding bone, it has been studied as a means to assess the posterior ligament complex that contributes to the maintenance of spinal stability.

Compared with computed tomography (CT) and MRI, ultrasonography provides less detailed images of bone and the structures within and near bone. However, ultrasonography has the advantages of being simpler, more widely available, requiring no exposure to ionizing radiation, and having less susceptibility to patient movement.

Spinal ultrasonography is also being studied to determine if it can be used to guide rehabilitation of neuromusculoskeletal disorders and back pain. In this application, rehabilitative ultrasound imaging (RUSI) has been defined as a “procedure used by physical therapists to evaluate muscle and related soft tissue morphology and function during exercise and physical tasks. RUSI is used to assist in the application of therapeutic interventions, providing feedback to the patient and physical therapist.” This information assists in determining which exercise treatment or rehabilitation programs can improve neuromuscular function for the individual (Teyhen, 2006).

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

This section is to be used for informational purposes only. FDA approval alone is not a basis for coverage.

The use of musculoskeletal ultrasound to diagnose low back pain is a procedure and, as such, is not regulated by the FDA. However, the devices used to perform this procedure are regulated by the FDA and many ultrasound devices and probes have received FDA approval for marketing. Additional information, under product code IYO (subsequent product codes IXT and IYN), is available at: <http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfPMN/pmn.cfm>. (Accessed June 6, 2023)

Policy History/Revision Information

Date	Summary of Changes
10/01/2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Routine review; no change to coverage guidelinesArchived previous policy version CS113KY.03

Instructions for Use

This Medical Policy provides assistance in interpreting UnitedHealthcare standard benefit plans. When deciding coverage, the federal, state, or contractual requirements for benefit plan coverage must be referenced as the terms of the federal, state, or contractual requirements for benefit plan coverage may differ from the standard benefit plan. In the event of a conflict, the federal, state, or contractual requirements for benefit plan coverage govern. Before using this policy, please check the federal,

state, or contractual requirements for benefit plan coverage. UnitedHealthcare reserves the right to modify its Policies and Guidelines as necessary. This Medical Policy is provided for informational purposes. It does not constitute medical advice.

UnitedHealthcare uses InterQual® for the primary medical/surgical criteria, and the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) for substance use, in administering health benefits. If InterQual® does not have applicable criteria, UnitedHealthcare may also use UnitedHealthcare Medical Policies, Coverage Determination Guidelines, and/or Utilization Review Guidelines that have been approved by the Kentucky Department for Medicaid Services. The UnitedHealthcare Medical Policies, Coverage Determination Guidelines, and Utilization Review Guidelines are intended to be used in connection with the independent professional medical judgment of a qualified health care provider and do not constitute the practice of medicine or medical advice.