COVERAGE:

A portable Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) for home use is considered experimental or investigational.

A wearable Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) for home use is considered medically necessary for high risk cardiac patients who meet the following criteria:

- Patients must have been evaluated by electrophysiologic studies (EPS) to document the possible occurrence of a life threatening arrhythmia (i.e. Ventricular Fibrillation (VF) or Ventricular Tachycardia (VT));

- The placement of an Automatic Internal Cardioverter Defibrillator (AICD) is contraindicated; and

- Any of the following is met:
  - VF or VT is not responsive to drug therapy and is not correctable by surgical intervention;
  - Post myocardial infarction patients exhibiting dangerous VF or VT; and
  - Patients with VF or VT while waiting for a heart transplant.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has recently approved a wearable Automatic External Defibrillator. This device is called LifeVest™ and is manufactured by Lifecor, Inc. of Pittsburgh, PA. The LifeVest™ is the only wearable AED currently approved by the FDA.

DESCRIPTION:

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) occurs when the heart’s rhythm suddenly becomes chaotic, causing the heart to stop pumping blood effectively. In many cases, SCA can be reversed with early defibrillation. To be most effective, defibrillation must occur as soon as possible after the onset of SCA. For every minute of delay in defibrillating the heart of an SCA victim, the chances of survival decrease by about 10%. Ninety percent of SCA victims will die if they have not been defibrillated within the first 10 minutes.

An AED is a compact device that is used to deliver an electrical shock to a victim of SCA. AED units use a microprocessor inside a portable defibrillator to interpret a victim’s heart rhythm through adhesive electrodes. The computer recognizes a VF or VT and either advises the operator whether electrical defibrillation is needed, or automatically
delivers electrical therapy.

A wearable AED is a vest-like garment that holds a monitor, electrodes, and a small alarm module. It is fully automatic but the patient is able to prevent electrical therapy that is not needed by responding to the built in alarm. A wearable AED is intended to be constantly worn by the patient who is at risk for SCA and for whom an implantable defibrillator is contraindicated.

RATIONALE:

There are no clinical studies demonstrating that the use of AED at home by non-medical persons improves health outcomes.

The Food and Drug Administration has recently approved the use of a wearable, vest-like garment AED for the seriously ill heart patients who are at risk of dying from SCA.

PRICING:

None

REFERENCES:


DISCLAIMER:

State and federal law, as well as contract language, including definitions and specific inclusions/exclusions, takes precedence over
Medical Policy and must be considered first in determining coverage. The member’s contract benefits in effect on the date that services are rendered must be used. Any benefits are subject to the payment of premiums for the date on which services are rendered. Medical technology is constantly evolving, and we reserve the right to review and update Medical Policy periodically. HMO Blue Texas physicians who are contracted/affiliated with a capitated IPA/medical group must contact the IPA/medical group for information regarding HMO claims/reimbursement information and other general polices and procedures.