LASER TREATMENT OF CONGENITAL PORT WINE STAIN (PWS) HEMANGIOMA
SUR704.008

COVERAGE:

Laser Treatment of Port Wine Stain (PWS) Hemangiomas MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR COVERAGE as it is considered a congenital defect. Benefits are available for laser treatment IF the surgery is performed within the contractual guidelines in the individual member's contract.

NOTE: Performance of a prior spot test is necessary to determine if the treatment would be suitable for the patient and what the degree of scarring may be.

NOTE: The size of the lesion may require more than one treatment.

NOTE: Treatment of an extensive area may require an intravenous type of anesthesia.

NOTE: This policy addresses the correction of a congenital anomaly (a condition existing at birth) which is a significant deviation from common anatomical form. The member’s contract should be reviewed to determine any specific cosmetic surgery limitations and exclusions, including possible age limitations on correction of congenital defects.

DESCRIPTION:

A laser is a highly focused beam of light that is converted to heat when absorbed by pigmented skin lesions. The laser selects the reddened areas and shrinks the vessels, resulting in gradual destruction of Port Wine Stains (PWS) Hemangiomas. The result is a less noticeable lesion. Repeated treatments can almost completely remove the superficial component. However, since the laser can only penetrate one to three millimeters, it cannot shrink any deep component. Flash-lamp pulse dye, pump dye, and sclero-laser are the primary lasers used to treat PWS Hemangiomas. Carbon dioxide and argon lasers are generally not used due to an increased incidence of significant scarring in children. Tuneable dye lasers result in less scarring.

PWS or other Hemangiomas are the most common benign tumors of the skin in neonates and may be present at birth or appear in the first months after birth. Hemangiomas come in all shapes and sizes, and are located primarily on the head and neck area. Most Hemangiomas tend to regress as the child grows older. However, the psycho-social scarring which occurs when a child has been forced to live with a facial deformity can be avoided by early, aggressive intervention, such as laser treatment. Hemangiomas that grow internally can be very dangerous and require immediate treatment should a life threatening condition appear.

RATIONALE:
Laser treatment is a well-established method of reducing PWS Hemangiomas. The safety and effectiveness have been proven by clinical experience worldwide. Check the contract under cosmetic surgery limitations and exclusions, including possible age limitations on correction of congenital defects.

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.

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