SUCTION ASSISTED LIPECTOMY
SUR704.007
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EFFECTIVE DATE: 1/23/2004

COVERAGE:

Suction Assisted Lipectomy, by any method, is considered not medically necessary. This procedure is considered cosmetic.

Note: Suction Assisted Lipectomy, when used as body contouring following surgery, is considered an integral part of the primary procedure.

DESCRIPTION:

Suction assisted lipectomy is a surgical technique used to remove unwanted deposits of fat from specific areas of the body, including but not limited to the following:

- face and neck;
- upper arms;
- axilla;
- breast;
- trunk;
- abdomen;
- buttocks;
- hips and thighs;
- knees, calves and ankles.

To perform this procedure, one or more small incisions are made near the area to be suctioned. The surgeon then places a slim, hollow tube called a cannula through the incision so that its tip penetrates the underlying fat. After the cannula is connected by flexible tubing to a suction pump, the surgeon moves the cannula back and forth through the fat, which is vacuumed into the tube.

Suction assisted lipectomy may be performed using a “wet” or a “dry” technique. The dry technique is performed without injecting additional fluids into the area being treated. The wet technique methods utilize fluids and very dilute lidocaine to fill and expand the fat compartment. The injected fluid contains an adequate amount of anesthetic. Variations of the wet technique include:

- Tumescent and super wet methods; fat is pre-injected with a salt-water solution containing small amounts of adrenaline and sometimes local anesthetic.
- Ultrasound Assisted Lipoplasty (UAL); a weak anesthetic solution is injected into the tissues marked for reduction. UAL uses sound
RATIONAL:

Suction assisted lipectomy is most often utilized as a contouring procedure to remove accumulated excess fat. There is no documented health improvement from this procedure and it is performed primarily to alter appearance. The service is considered cosmetic.

An additional literature search was completed through the MEDLINE database for the period of May 2000 – May 2003. No additional information was found that would change the position of this policy.

PRICING:

None

REFERENCES:

• Guiding principles for liposuction. The American Society for Dermatologic Surgery, February 1997

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.