INFRARED COAGULATION FOR HEMORRHOIDS
SUR709.024

COVERAGE:

Infrared Coagulation or Infrared Photocoagulation MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR COVERAGE for persistently bleeding or painful first- and second-degree internal hemorrhoids.

DESCRIPTION:

Hemorrhoids are swollen blood vessels in and around the anus and lower rectum that stretch under pressure, similar to varicose veins in the legs. The increased pressure and swelling may result from straining to move the bowel. Other contributing factors include pregnancy, heredity, aging, and chronic constipation or diarrhea. Hemorrhoids are either inside the anus (internal) or under the skin around the anus (external). Treatment (medical, surgical, or alternative therapies) is based upon the patient's symptoms.

Infrared Coagulation (IRC) or Infrared Photocoagulation (IRPC) is useful for first- and second-degree internal hemorrhoids. The IRC/IRPC apparatus consists of a power unit and a hand-held applicator probe. The tip of the probe is coated with a polymer to prevent tissue adherence. After inserting the probe through an anoscope, pulses of radiation, lasting 1 to 1.5 seconds are applied to the base of the hemorrhoid. The radiation causes tissue death at the hemorrhoid base, thus forming a scar, reducing the blood flow, and decreasing the hemorrhoidal size and threat of prolapse. Repetitive treatments, usually within a six month period, may be necessary to achieve the desired outcome. The procedure is easily done as an outpatient or in a physician's office.

RATIONALE:

Numerous clinical trials demonstrate that IRC/IRPC is effective in relieving symptoms, and that its ease of administration for both the patient and physician offers advantages relative to alternative modalities as a first-line treatment for low grade hemorrhoids.

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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