



CLINICAL GUIDELINES

CMM-311: Knee Replacement/Arthroplasty

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CMM-311.1: Definition

- **Knee arthroplasty** is an orthopaedic surgical procedure during which the articular surface of the knee joint is replaced, remodeled or realigned.
- **Knee replacement** is a form of arthroplasty that includes the surgical replacement of the knee joint with a prosthesis.
- **Prosthesis** refers to an artificial device used to replace a structural element within a joint to improve and enhance function.
- **Total knee replacement** involves surgical reconstruction or replacement of the entire knee joint as a result of unicompartmental, bicompartamental, or tricompartmental involvement.
- **Partial knee replacement** involves surgical reconstruction or replacement of one joint surface of the knee joint as a result of unicompartmental (e.g., medial, lateral, or patellofemoral) involvement.
- **Revision of knee replacement (partial or total)** involves surgical reconstruction or replacement due to failure or complications of previous knee replacement.
- **The Modified Outerbridge Classification** is a system that has been developed for judging articular cartilage injury to the knee. This system allows delineation of varying areas of chondral pathology, based on the qualitative appearance of the cartilage surface, and can assist in identifying those injuries that are suitable for repair techniques. The characterization of cartilage in this system is as follows:
 - ◆ Grade I - Softening with swelling
 - ◆ Grade II - Fragmentation and fissuring less than one square centimeter (1 cm²)
 - ◆ Grade III - Fragmentation and fissuring greater than one square centimeter (1 cm²)
 - ◆ Grade IV - Subchondral bone exposed
- **The Kellgren-Lawrence Grading System** is a radiographic grading system that has been developed for describing osteoarthritic changes to the knee. When used, the radiographic findings are typically reported within one of the following categories:
 - ◆ Grade I – Doubtful narrowing of joint space and possible osteophytic lipping
 - ◆ Grade II – Definite osteophytes and possible narrowing of joint space
 - ◆ Grade III – Moderate multiple osteophytes, definite narrowing of joint space, some sclerosis, and possible deformity of bone contour
 - ◆ Grade IV – Large osteophytes, marked narrowing of joint space, severe sclerosis, and definite deformity of bone contour

- **Non-surgical management**, with regard to the treatment of knee osteoarthritis, is defined as any provider-directed non-surgical treatment, which has been demonstrated in the scientific literature as efficacious and/or is considered reasonable care in the treatment of knee pain from osteoarthritis. The types of treatment involved can include, but are not limited to: relative rest/activity modification, weight loss, supervised physiotherapy modalities and therapeutic exercises, oral prescription and non-prescription medications, bracing and other assistive devices (e.g., cane, crutches, walker, wheelchair), and/or intra-articular injections (i.e., steroid and/or viscosupplementation).

CMM-311.2: General Guidelines

The determination of medical necessity for the performance of knee replacement (partial or total) is always made on a case-by-case basis.

CMM-311.3: Indications and Non-Indications

Partial Knee Replacement

- **Partial knee replacement** (medial, lateral, or patellofemoral unicompartmental) is considered **medically necessary** when **ALL** of the following criteria have been met:
 - ◆ Function-limiting pain at short distances (e.g., walking less than ¼ mile, limiting activity to two city blocks, the equivalent to walking the length of a shopping mall) for at least three (3) months duration
 - ◆ Loss of knee function which interferes with the ability to carry out age appropriate activities of daily living and/or demands of employment
 - ◆ Severe unicompartmental (medial, lateral, or patellofemoral) degenerative arthritis evidenced by **EITHER** of the following:
 - Large osteophytes, marked narrowing of joint space, severe sclerosis, and definite deformity of bone contour (i.e., Kellgren-Lawrence Grade IV radiographic findings)
 - Exposed subchondral bone (i.e., Modified Outerbridge Classification Grade IV arthroscopy findings)
 - ◆ Intact, stable ligaments, in particular the anterior cruciate ligament
 - ◆ Knee arc of motion (full extension to full flexion) greater than 90°
 - ◆ Failure of at least three (3) months of provider-directed non-surgical management
 - For patients with BMI > 40, there must be failure of at least six (6) months of provider-directed non-surgical management
 - Provider-directed non-surgical management may be inappropriate. The medical record must clearly document why provider-directed non-surgical management is not appropriate.

- **Patellofemoral unicompartmental replacement** to manage protracted anterior knee pain and/or mechanical symptoms attributed to the patellofemoral joint following a total knee replacement, during which patellar replacement was not performed at the time of the index knee replacement, is considered **medically necessary** when the above criteria are met for the performance of patellofemoral unicompartmental replacement, with the exception of radiographic criteria.
- **Partial knee replacement** (medial, lateral, or patellofemoral unicompartmental) is considered **not medically necessary** for any other indication or condition, when **ANY** of the following criteria is present:
 - ◆ Grade III or IV patellofemoral joint arthritis (when unicompartmental replacement is to be performed of the medial or lateral compartment) and Grade IV medial or lateral compartment degenerative changes (when unicompartmental replacement is to be performed of the patellofemoral compartment), evidenced by **ANY** of the following:
 - Large osteophytes, marked narrowing of joint space, severe sclerosis, and definite deformity of bone contour (i.e., Kellgren-Lawrence Grade IV radiographic findings)
 - Moderate multiple osteophytes, definite narrowing of joint space, some sclerosis, and possible deformity of bone contour (i.e., Kellgren-Lawrence Grade III radiographic findings)
 - Exposed subchondral bone (i.e., Modified Outerbridge Classification Grade IV arthroscopy findings)
 - ◆ Tibial or femoral shaft deformity
 - ◆ Radiographic evidence of medial or lateral subluxation
 - ◆ Flexion contracture greater than 15°
 - ◆ Varus deformity greater than 15°
 - ◆ Valgus deformity greater than 20°
 - ◆ Inflammatory arthropathy
 - ◆ Active local or systemic infection
 - ◆ Osseous abnormalities that cannot be optimally managed prior to surgery which would increase the likelihood of a poor surgical outcome (i.e., inadequate bone stock to support the implant)
 - ◆ Severe lack of collateral ligament integrity leading to joint instability
 - ◆ Charcot joint
 - ◆ One or more uncontrolled or unstable medical conditions that would significantly increase the risk of morbidity (e.g., cardiac, pulmonary, liver, genitourinary, or metabolic disease; hypertension; abnormal serum electrolyte levels)
 - ◆ Vascular insufficiency, significant muscular atrophy of the leg, or neuromuscular disease severe enough to compromise implant stability or post-operative recovery
 - ◆ Severe immunocompromised state

Total Knee Replacement

- **Total Knee Replacement** is considered **medically necessary** when **ALL** of the following criteria have been met:
 - ◆ Function-limiting pain at short distances (e.g., walking less than ¼ mile, limiting activity to two city blocks, the equivalent to walking the length of a shopping mall) for at least three (3) months duration
 - ◆ Loss of knee function which interferes with the ability to carry out age appropriate activities of daily living and/or demands of employment
 - ◆ Severe [unicompartmental \(medial, lateral, or patellofemoral\)](#), bicompartamental, or tricompartmental degenerative arthritis evidenced by **EITHER** of the following:
 - Large osteophytes, marked narrowing of joint space, severe sclerosis, and definite deformity of bone contour (i.e., Kellgren-Lawrence Grade IV radiographic findings)
 - Exposed subchondral bone (i.e., Modified Outerbridge Classification Grade IV arthroscopy findings)~~The patient is not a candidate for partial (unicompartmental) knee replacement~~
 - ◆ Failure of at least three (3) months of provider-directed non-surgical management
 - For patients with BMI > 40, there must be failure of at least six (6) months of provider-directed non-surgical management
 - Provider-directed non-surgical management may be inappropriate. The medical record must clearly document why provider-directed non-surgical management is not appropriate.
- [Total Knee Replacement is considered medically necessary for a fracture of the distal femur when conservative management or surgical fixation is not considered a reasonable option.](#)
- **Total Knee Replacement** is considered **not medically necessary** for any other indication or condition, including when **ANY** of the following criteria is present:
 - ◆ Active local or systemic infection
 - ◆ Osseous abnormalities that cannot be optimally managed ~~prior to surgery~~ and which would increase the likelihood of a poor surgical outcome (i.e., inadequate bone stock to support the implant)
 - ◆ Joint instability due to a lack of collateral ligament integrity not amenable to surgical correction ([e.g., specialized implant, constrained implant, or a hinge implant](#))
 - ◆ Greater than 30 degrees of fixed varus or valgus deformity not amenable to surgical correction.
 - ◆ ~~Charcot joint~~
 - ◆ One or more uncontrolled or unstable medical conditions that would significantly increase the risk of morbidity (e.g., cardiac, pulmonary, liver, genitourinary, or metabolic disease; hypertension; abnormal serum electrolyte levels)

- ◆ Vascular insufficiency, significant muscular atrophy of the leg, or neuromuscular disease severe enough to compromise implant stability or post-operative recovery
- ◆ Severe immunocompromised state
- Refer to **MS-12: Osteoarthritis** and **MS-25: Knee** for the advanced imaging indications prior to knee replacement surgery.

Revision of Knee Replacement – Partial or Total

- **Revision of Knee Replacement** (including revision of a total knee replacement, revision of a medial, lateral, or patellofemoral unicompartmental replacement to another medial, lateral, or patellofemoral unicompartmental replacement, or revision of a medial, lateral, or patellofemoral unicompartmental replacement to a total knee replacement) is considered **medically necessary** for an individual who has previously undergone a partial or total knee replacement when **ANY** of the following criteria have been met:
 - ◆ Presence of **ANY** of the following:
 - Fracture or dislocation of the patella
 - ~~Instability of the components~~
 - Aseptic loosening
 - Periprosthetic infection
 - Periprosthetic fracture
 - [Implant fracture or component failure](#)
 - [Stiffness more than 12 weeks post-operatively when manipulation is deemed unsafe by provider with well positioned, well fixed, appropriately sized complements](#)
 - [Stiffness due to component sizing or positioning](#)
 - [Instability of the knee](#)
 - [Clinically significant, symptomatic limb malalignment due to existing component position](#)
 - ◆ Unexplained function-limiting pain at short distances (e.g., walking less than ¼ mile, limiting activity to two city blocks, the equivalent to walking the length of a shopping mall) for greater than six (6) months unresponsive to provider-directed non-surgical management
 - ◆ Kellgren-Lawrence Grade IV radiographic findings in the non-replaced medial, lateral, or patellofemoral compartments if revising from a partial (unicompartmental) knee replacement to a total joint replacement
- **Revision of knee replacement** is considered **not medically necessary** for any other indication or condition, ~~including Charcot joint.~~
- **Isolated polyethylene liner exchange (IPE)** is considered **medically necessary** when **ANY** of the following criteria have been met:
 - ◆ Wear and Osteolysis:
 - Symptomatic individual with progressive osteolysis noted on imaging studies which also confirm well-fixed implants in acceptable position

- ◆ Periprosthetic joint infection:
 - Individual is less than four (4) weeks from the index replacement procedure with well-fixed implants
 - ◆ Stiffness following total knee replacement (flexion contracture of > 15 degrees **with-or** flexion limited to < 90 degrees):
 - Individual presents later than three (3) months from the index replacement procedure, after failure of physical therapy and manipulation under anesthesia with persistent restricted range-of-motion
 - ◆ Instability:
 - Individual with **flexion or** mid-flexion instability without component malrotation or malalignment
- **Isolated polyethylene liner exchange (IPE)** is considered **not medically necessary** for any other indication or condition.
- Refer to **MS-16: Post-Operative Joint Replacement Surgery** and **MS-25: Knee** for advanced imaging indications following knee replacement surgery.

Knee Arthroplasty

- Refer to **CMM-312.3: Procedures for Patellofemoral Conditions** for the indications and non-indications of trochleoplasty using CPT® 27442 for a hypoplastic trochlea in patients with recurrent patellar instability.

Lysis of Adhesions/Manipulation Under Anesthesia (MUA)

- Refer to **CMM-312.3: Lysis of Adhesion/Manipulation Under Anesthesia (MUA)** for indications and non-indications of lysis of adhesions/manipulation under anesthesia (MUA).

CMM-311.4: Experimental, Investigational, or Unproven

- Based on lack of scientific evidence of efficacy and safety, the following are considered **experimental, investigational, or unproven**:
- ◆ Bicompartamental knee arthroplasty
 - ◆ Bi-unicompartamental knee arthroplasty
 - ◆ Focal resurfacing of a single knee joint defect (e.g., Arthrosurface® femoral condyle implant)
 - ◆ Unicompartamental free-floating (un-fixed) interpositional device (e.g., UniSpacer®)
- The following CPT codes for arthroplasty of the patella, distal femur, or tibia are considered **experimental, investigational or unproven**:
- ◆ CPT® 27437 - Arthroplasty, patella; without prosthesis
 - ◆ CPT® 27440 - Arthroplasty, knee, tibial plateau
 - ◆ CPT® 27441 - Arthroplasty, knee, tibial plateau; with debridement and partial synovectomy
 - ◆ CPT® 27443 - Arthroplasty, femoral condyles or tibial plateau(s), knee; with debridement and partial synovectomy

CMM-311.5: Procedure (CPT®) Codes

This guideline relates to the CPT® code set below. Codes are displayed for informational purposes only. Any given code's inclusion on this list does not necessarily indicate prior authorization is required.	
CPT®	Code Description/Definition
27438	Arthroplasty, patella; with prosthesis
27442	Arthroplasty, femoral condyles or tibial plateau(s), knee
27445	Arthroplasty, knee, hinge prosthesis (e.g. Walldius type)
27446	Arthroplasty, knee, condyle and plateau; medial OR lateral compartment
27447	Arthroplasty, knee, condyle and plateau; medial AND lateral compartments with or without patella resurfacing (total knee Arthroplasty)
27486	Revision of total knee Arthroplasty, with or without allograft; 1 component
27487	Revision of total knee Arthroplasty, with or without allograft; femoral and entire tibial component
27488	Removal of prosthesis, including total knee prosthesis, methylmethacrylate with or without insertion of spacer, knee
+0055	Computer-assisted musculoskeletal surgical navigational orthopedic procedure, with image-guidance based on CT/MRI images (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)
HCPCS Level II	
S2900	Surgical techniques requiring use of robotic surgical system (list separately in addition to code for primary procedure)
The use of the following CPT® codes are considered experimental, investigational, and unproven.	
27437	Arthroplasty, patella; without prosthesis
27440	Arthroplasty, knee, tibial plateau
27441	Arthroplasty, knee, tibial plateau; with debridement and partial synovectomy
27443	Arthroplasty, femoral condyles or tibial plateau(s), knee; with debridement and partial synovectomy
This list may not be all inclusive and is not intended to be used for coding/billing purposes. The final determination of reimbursement for services is the decision of the health plan and is based on the individual's policy or benefit entitlement structure as well as claims processing rules.	

CMM-311.6: References

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