

Cigna Medical Coverage Policies – Musculoskeletal Epidural Steroid Injections

Effective March 15, 2018



Instructions for use

The following coverage policy applies to health benefit plans administered by Cigna. Coverage policies are intended to provide guidance in interpreting certain standard Cigna benefit plans and are used by medical directors and other health care professionals in making medical necessity and other coverage determinations. Please note the terms of a customer's particular benefit plan document may differ significantly from the standard benefit plans upon which these coverage policies are based. For example, a customer's benefit plan document may contain a specific exclusion related to a topic addressed in a coverage policy.

In the event of a conflict, a customer's benefit plan document always supersedes the information in the coverage policy. In the absence of federal or state coverage mandates, benefits are ultimately determined by the terms of the applicable benefit plan document. Coverage determinations in each specific instance require consideration of:

1. The terms of the applicable benefit plan document in effect on the date of service
2. Any applicable laws and regulations
3. Any relevant collateral source materials including coverage policies
4. The specific facts of the particular situation

Coverage policies relate exclusively to the administration of health benefit plans. Coverage policies are not recommendations for treatment and should never be used as treatment guidelines.

This evidence-based medical coverage policy has been developed by eviCore, Inc. Some information in this coverage policy may not apply to all benefit plans administered by Cigna.

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CMM-200: Epidural Steroid Injections (ESI)

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CMM-200.1 Definitions

- **Transforaminal epidural steroid injection (TFESI)** is a therapeutic injection of contrast (absent allergy to contrast) performed at a single or multiple spinal levels followed by the introduction of a corticosteroid and possibly a local anesthetic by inserting a needle into the neuroforamen under fluoroscopic or computed tomography (CT) guidance.
- **Selective Nerve Root Block (SNRB)** is a diagnostic injection of contrast (absent allergy to contrast) of a single nerve root to assist with surgical planning followed by the introduction of a local anesthetic by inserting a needle into the neuroforamen under fluoroscopic or computed tomography (CT) guidance. SNRB's are erroneously referred to as a Transforaminal Epidural Steroid Injection (TFESI), although technically SNRB's involve the introduction of anesthetic only and are used for diagnostic purposes.
- **Interlaminar epidural steroid injection (ESI)** is an injection of contrast (absent allergy to contrast), followed by the introduction of a corticosteroid and possibly a local anesthetic into the epidural space of the spine either through a paramedian or midline interlaminar approach under fluoroscopic guidance.
- **Caudal epidural steroid injection (ESI)** is an the injection of contrast (absent allergy to contrast), followed by the introduction of corticosteroids and possibly a local anesthetic into the epidural space of the spine by inserting a needle through the sacral hiatus under fluoroscopic guidance into the epidural space at the sacral canal.
- **Radiculopathy**, for the purpose of this policy, is defined as the presence of pain, dysaesthesia(s), or paraesthesia(s) reported by the individual in a specified dermatomal distribution of an involved named spinal root(s), causing significant functional limitations resulting in diminished quality of life and impaired, age-appropriate activities of daily living, and **EITHER** of the following:
 - ◆ Documentation of **ONE or MORE** of the following, concordant with nerve root compression of the involved named spinal root(s) demonstrated on a detailed neurologic examination within the prior three (3) months:
 - Loss of strength of specific named muscle(s) or myotomal distribution(s)
 - Altered sensation to light touch, pressure, pin prick or temperature
 - Diminished, absent or asymmetric reflex(es)
 - ◆ Documentation of **EITHER** of the following performed within the prior 12 months:
 - A concordant radiologist's interpretation of an advanced diagnostic imaging study (MRI or CT) of the spine demonstrating compression of the involved named spinal nerve root(s) or foraminal stenosis at the concordant level(s)
 - Electrodiagnostic studies (EMG/NCV's) diagnostic of nerve root compression of the involved named spinal nerve root(s).

- **Radicular pain** is pain which radiates to the lower extremity along the course of a spinal nerve root, typically resulting from compression, inflammation and/or injury to the nerve root.
- **Radiculitis** is defined, for the purpose of this policy, as radicular pain without objective neurological findings on physical examination.
- **Spinal stenosis** refers to the narrowing of the spinal canal usually due to spinal degeneration that occurs with aging. It may also be the result of spinal disc herniation, osteoarthritis or a tumor. Lumbar spinal stenosis results in low back pain as well as pain or abnormal sensations in the legs, thighs, feet or buttocks, or loss of bladder and bowel control. Neurogenic claudication is often a clinical condition that results from spinal stenosis.

CMM-200.2 General Guidelines

The determination of medical necessity for the performance of a selective nerve root block (SNRB) or a therapeutic epidural steroid injection is always made on a case-by-case basis.

Please note, this guideline does not apply to epidural injections administered for obstetrical or surgical epidural anesthesia.

An epidural steroid injection should be performed with the use of fluoroscopic or CT guidance and the injection of a contrast, with the exception of an emergent situation or when fluoroscopic/CT guidance or the injection of contrast is contraindicated (e.g., pregnancy).

The use of an indwelling catheter to administer a continuous infusion/intermittent bolus should be limited to use in a hospital setting only. It is inappropriate to represent the use of a catheter for single episode injection(s) that is/are commonly performed in an outpatient setting as an indwelling catheter for continuous infusion/intermittent bolus.

There is insufficient scientific evidence to support the scheduling of a “series-of-three” injections in either a diagnostic or therapeutic approach. The medical necessity of subsequent injections should be evaluated individually and be based on the response of the individual to the previous injection with regard to clinically relevant sustained reductions in pain, decreased need for medication and improvement in the individual’s functional abilities.

Selective nerve root blocks performed for the purpose of treating pain may be termed therapeutic selective nerve root blocks. There is insufficient evidence to support the clinical utility of therapeutic selective nerve root blocks.

When performing transforaminal blocks (SNRB), no more than two (2) nerve root levels should be injected during the same session/procedure.

When medical necessity criteria is met, a total of three (3) epidural steroid injections per episode of pain may be performed during a 12 month period of time, and no more than four (4) epidural steroid injections per region, per year may be performed.

Additionally, when medical necessity criteria are met for a cervical/thoracic interlaminar and/or cervical/thoracic transforaminal epidural steroid injection (ESI), advanced diagnostic imaging should be performed within 12 months prior to the injection.

CMM-200.3 Indications: Selective Nerve Root Block (SNRB)

A diagnostic selective nerve root block (SNRB), performed at a single nerve root, involving the introduction of anesthetic only, is considered **medically necessary** when attempting to establish the diagnosis of radicular pain (including radiculitis) or radiculopathy, when the diagnosis remains uncertain after standard evaluation (neurologic examination, radiological studies and electrodiagnostic studies) in the following clinical situations:

- ◆ When the physical signs and symptoms differ from that found on imaging studies
- ◆ When there is clinical evidence of multi-level nerve root pathology
- ◆ When the clinical presentation is suggestive, but not typical for both nerve root and peripheral nerve or joint disease involvement
- ◆ When the clinical findings are consistent with radiculopathy in a dermatomal distribution, but the imaging studies do not corroborate the findings (positive straight leg raise test)
- ◆ When the individual has had previous spinal surgery
- ◆ For purposes of surgical planning.

A second selective nerve root block is considered **medically necessary** when the following criteria are met:

- ◆ Evidence of multilevel pathology
- ◆ It has been at least two weeks since the prior injection

CMM-200.4 Indications: Epidural Steroid Injections (Transforaminal, Interlaminar, or Caudal)

An epidural steroid injection is considered **medically necessary** for **ANY** of the following indications when the associated medical necessity criteria are met:

- ◆ For treatment of a presumed radiculopathy when there has been failure of at least six (6) weeks of conservative treatment (e.g., exercise, physical methods including physical therapy and/or chiropractic care, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs [NSAID's] and/or muscle relaxants).
- ◆ For treatment of presumed radiculitis or radicular pain when **ALL** of the following criteria are met:

- Radicular pain, with or without motor weakness, which follows a specified dermatomal distribution of an involved named spinal root(s)
- A positive straight leg raise, crossed leg raise test, and/or Spurling's test
- Failure of at least six (6) weeks of conservative treatment (e.g., exercise, physical methods including physical therapy and/or chiropractic care, NSAID's and/or muscle relaxants).
- ◆ When a transforaminal epidural steroid injection is performed in addition to an intra-articular facet joint injection with synovial cyst aspiration and the following criteria are met:
 - Advanced diagnostic imaging studies (e.g., MRI, CT, CT myelogram) confirm compression or displacement of the corresponding nerve root by a facet joint synovial cyst
 - Clinical correlation with the individual's signs and symptoms of radicular pain or radiculopathy, based on history and physical examination.
- ◆ As an initial trial when there is evidence of symptomatic spinal stenosis and **ALL** of the following criteria are met:
 - Diagnostic evaluation has ruled out other potential causes of pain
 - MRI or CT with or without myelography within the past twelve (12) months demonstrates severe spinal stenosis at the level to be treated
 - Significant functional limitations resulting in diminished quality of life and impaired, age-appropriate activities of daily living
 - Failure of at least four (4) weeks of conservative treatment (e.g., exercise, physical methods including physical therapy and/or chiropractic care, NSAID's and/or muscle relaxants).
- ◆ A repeat epidural steroid injection when at least **TWO** of the following criteria are met for two (2) or more week's duration:
 - 50% or greater pain relief
 - Increase in the level of function/physical activity (e.g., return to work)
 - Reduction in the use of pain medication and/or additional medical services such as physical therapy/chiropractic care

CMM 200.5 Non-Indications: SNRB

Diagnostic and therapeutic SNRBs are considered **not medically necessary** for **ANY** other indication.

A second/repeat selective nerve root block is considered **not medically necessary** for **EITHER** of the following:

- ◆ An inadequate response to the first block, as determined by the injectate utilized
- ◆ An absence of multilevel pathology, when the first injection is performed under fluoroscopy/CT guidance using contrast

CMM 200.6 Non-Indications: ESI

An epidural steroid injection performed with ultrasound guidance is considered **experimental, investigational or unproven**.

An epidural steroid injection is considered **not medically necessary** for **ALL** of the following indications:

- ◆ When performed without imaging guidance (i.e., CT, fluoroscopy)
- ◆ Transforaminal epidural steroid injection performed at more than two (2) nerve root levels during the same session/procedure
- ◆ An interlaminar epidural steroid injection, performed at more than a single level during the same session/procedure
- ◆ Epidural steroid injection administered in the same region as other spinal injections on the same day of service
- ◆ Performed in isolation (i.e., without the individual participating in an active rehabilitation program/home exercise program/functional restoration program)
- ◆ Repeating epidural steroid injections more frequently than every seven (7) days
- ◆ More than three (3) epidural steroid injections per episode of pain
- ◆ More than four (4) epidural steroid injections per region, per year
- ◆ For axial spinal pain (i.e., absence of radiculopathy, myelopathy, myeloradiculopathy)
- ◆ A caudal epidural steroid injection for levels above L4-L5 without supporting clinical rationale for use of alternative approaches (e.g., translaminar, transforaminal)

CMM-200.7 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
62321	Injection(s), of diagnostic or therapeutic substance(s) (eg, anesthetic, antispasmodic, opioid, steroid, other solution), not including neurolytic substances, including needle or catheter placement, interlaminar epidural or subarachnoid, cervical or thoracic; with imaging guidance (ie, fluoroscopy or CT)
62323	Injection(s), of diagnostic or therapeutic substance(s) (eg, anesthetic, antispasmodic, opioid, steroid, other solution), not including neurolytic substances, including needle or catheter placement, interlaminar epidural or subarachnoid, lumbar or sacral (caudal); with imaging guidance (ie, fluoroscopy or CT)
62325	Injection(s), including indwelling catheter placement, continuous infusion or intermittent bolus, of diagnostic or therapeutic substance(s) (eg, anesthetic, antispasmodic, opioid, steroid, other solution), not including neurolytic substances, interlaminar epidural or subarachnoid, cervical or thoracic; with imaging guidance (ie, fluoroscopy or CT)
62327	Injection (s), including indwelling catheter placement, continuous infusion or intermittent bolus, of diagnostic or therapeutic substance(s) (eg, anesthetic, antispasmodic, opioid, steroid, other solution), not including neurolytic substances, interlaminar epidural or subarachnoid, lumbar or sacral (caudal); with imaging guidance (ie, fluoroscopy or CT)
64479	Injection(s), anesthetic agent and/or steroid, transforaminal epidural; with imaging guidance (fluoroscopy or CT); cervical or thoracic, single level
+64480	Injection(s), anesthetic agent and/or transforaminal epidural with imaging guidance (fluoroscopy or CT); cervical or thoracic, each additional level (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)
64483	Injection(s), anesthetic agent and/or steroid, transforaminal epidural, with imaging guidance (fluoroscopy or CT); lumbar or sacral, single level
+64484	Injection(s), anesthetic agent and/or steroid, transforaminal epidural, with imaging guidance (fluoroscopy or CT); lumbar or sacral, each additional level (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)
CPT®	Code Description/Definition
62320	Injection(s), of diagnostic or therapeutic substance(s) (eg, anesthetic, antispasmodic, opioid, steroid, other solution), not including neurolytic substances, including needle or catheter placement, interlaminar epidural or subarachnoid, cervical or thoracic; without imaging guidance.
62322	Injection(s), of diagnostic or therapeutic substance(s) (eg, anesthetic, antispasmodic, opioid, steroid, other solution), not including neurolytic substances, including needle or catheter placement, interlaminar epidural or subarachnoid, lumbar or sacral (caudal); without imaging guidance
62324	Injection(s), including indwelling catheter placement, continuous infusion or intermittent bolus, of diagnostic or therapeutic substance(s) (eg, anesthetic, antispasmodic, opioid, steroid, other solution), not including neurolytic substances, interlaminar epidural or subarachnoid, cervical or thoracic; without imaging guidance.

Epidural Steroid Injections (ESI)

62326	Injection (s), including indwelling catheter placement, continuous infusion or intermittent bolus, of diagnostic or therapeutic substance(s) (eg, anesthetic, antispasmodic, opioid, steroid, other solution), not including neurolytic substances, interlaminar epidural or subarachnoid, lumbar or sacral (caudal); without imaging guidance.
CPT®	Codes Considered Experimental, Investigational, or Unproven
0228T	Injection(s), anesthetic agent and/or steroid, transforaminal epidural, with ultrasound guidance cervical or thoracic; single cervical or thoracic; single level
0229T	Injection(s), anesthetic agent and/or steroid, transforaminal epidural, with ultrasound guidance, cervical or thoracic; each additional level (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)
0230T	Injection(s), anesthetic agent and/or steroid, transforaminal epidural, with ultrasound guidance, lumbar or sacral; single level
0231T	Injection(s), anesthetic agent and/or steroid, transforaminal epidural, with ultrasound guidance, lumbar or sacral; each additional level (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)
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.	

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