

Colonoscopy and Sigmoidoscopy - Diagnostic

L34614

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Coverage Indications

- A. The following are Medicare-covered indications for diagnostic colonoscopy:
1. Evaluation of an abnormality on barium enema or other imaging study, which is likely to be clinically significant, such as filling a defect or stricture.
 2. Evaluation of unexplained gastrointestinal bleeding:
 - a. Hematochezia not thought to be from rectum or perianal source,
 - b. Melena of unknown origin; after an upper GI source has been excluded,
 - c. Presence of fecal occult blood,
 - d. Positive stool DNA test results. (e.g. guaiac/Fecal immunochemical test {FIT Test}/Cologuard).
 3. Unexplained iron deficiency anemia.
 4. Examination to evaluate entire colon for synchronous cancer or polyps in a patient with treatable cancer or polyp.
 5. Chronic inflammatory bowel disease of the colon if more precise diagnosis or determination of the extent of activity of disease will influence immediate management.
 6. Clinically significant diarrhea of unexplained origin with additional symptoms (e.g., with weight loss).
 7. Intraoperative identification of the site of a lesion that cannot be detected by palpation or gross inspection at surgery (e.g., polypectomy site or location of a bleeding source).
 8. Treatment of bleeding from such lesions as vascular malformation, ulceration, neoplasm, and polypectomy site (e.g., electrocoagulation, heater probe, laser or injection therapy).
 9. Removal of foreign body.
 10. Excision of colonic polyps.
 11. Decompression of acute nontoxic megacolon or sigmoid volvulus, pseudo obstruction of the colon (Ogilvie's syndrome).
 12. Balloon dilatation of stenotic lesions (e.g., anastomotic strictures).

13. Palliative treatment of stenosing or bleeding neoplasm.
 14. Marking a neoplasm for localization.
 15. Evaluation of a patient with endocarditis due to streptococcus bovis or any bacterium of enteric origin.
 16. Suspected disease of terminal ileum.
 17. Evaluation of acute colonic ischemia/ischemic bowel disease.
 18. In patients with Crohn's colitis and chronic ulcerative colitis: colonoscopy every one or two years with multiple biopsies for detection of cancer and dysplasia in patients with:
 - a. Pancolitis of eight or more years duration; or
 - b. Left-sided colitis of 15 or more years duration.
 19. Evaluation within 6 months of the removal of sessile polyps to determine and document total excision. If evaluation indicates that residual polyp is present, excision should be done with repeat colonoscopy within 6 months. After evidence of total excision without return of the polyp, repeat colonoscopy yearly.
 20. Patients undergoing curative resection for colon or rectal cancer should undergo a colonoscopy 1 year after the resection (or 1 year following the performance of the colonoscopy that was performed to clear the colon of synchronous disease).
- B. A diagnostic colonoscopy is not considered medically necessary for the following conditions:
1. Chronic, stable, irritable bowel syndrome or chronic abdominal pain. There are unusual exceptions in which colonoscopy may be done to rule out organic disease, especially if symptoms are unresponsive to therapy.
 2. Acute limited diarrhea.
 3. Hemorrhoids.
 4. Metastatic adenocarcinoma of unknown primary site in the absence of colonic symptoms when it will not influence management.
 5. Routine follow-up of inflammatory bowel disease (except for cancer surveillance in Crohn's colitis, chronic ulcerative colitis).
 6. Routine examination of the colon in patients about to undergo elective abdominal surgery for non-colonic disease.
 7. Upper GI bleeding or melena with a demonstrated upper GI source.
- C. A diagnostic flexible sigmoidoscopy is covered for the following indications:

1. Evaluation of suspected distal colonic disease when there is no indication for a colonoscopy.
 2. Evaluation for anastomotic recurrence in rectosigmoid carcinoma.
 3. All of the covered indications listed for a diagnostic colonoscopy.
- D. A diagnostic flexible sigmoidoscopy is not indicated when a colonoscopy is indicated.

Procedure Code Table

Table 1. L34614 Colonoscopy and Sigmoidoscopy - Diagnostic Associated Procedure Codes

| Code | Description |
|-------|--|
| 45380 | Colonoscopy, flexible; with biopsy, single or multiple |
| 45378 | Colonoscopy, flexible; diagnostic, including collection of specimen(s) by brushing or washing, when performed (separate procedure) |

Coverage and Tracking Information

Table 1. L34614 Colonoscopy and Sigmoidoscopy - Diagnostic Coverage Areas

| Service Level | Covered Staes |
|---------------|--|
| Inpatient | AL, AK, AZ, AR, CA (Entire State), CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, IN, IA, KA, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MS, MO (entire state), MT, NE, NV, NH, NJ, NM, NC, ND, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VT, VA, WA, WV, WI, WY |
| Outpatient | IA, KS, MO, NE, IN, MI |

Table 2. L34614 Colonoscopy and Sigmoidoscopy - Diagnostic Tracking Information

| Information | Description |
|-------------------------|---|
| Revision Effective Date | For services performed on or after 10/01/2019 |
| Original Effective Date | For services performed on or after 10/01/2015 |

References

- [1] Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. (2022). Local Coverage Determination (LCD) Colonoscopy and Sigmoidoscopy-Diagnostic L34614. Retrieved: January 2023. <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/view/lcd.aspx?LCDId=34614#:~:text=Sigmoidoscopy%20and%20colonoscopy%20testing%20allows,other%20lesions%20of%20the%20intestines.>

Definitions

Barium enema is a procedure in which a liquid that contains barium sulfate is put through the anus into the rectum and colon which helps show pictures of the colon, rectum and anus on an x-ray.

Crohn's disease is an inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) that causes inflammation of the digestive tract. Symptoms include abdominal pain, severe diarrhea, fatigue, weight loss and malnutrition.

Colon polyp is a small clump of cells that form on the lining of the colon or rectum that are mostly harmless but can develop into cancer.

Colonoscopy is a procedure in which a flexible fiber-optic instrument is inserted through the anus in order to examine the colon.

Fecal occult blood (FOB) is blood in the feces that is not visibly apparent.

Guaiaec fecal occult blood test is a test that checks for occult (microscopic) blood in the stool. Small samples of stool are placed on a special card coated with a chemical substance called guaiac and sent to a laboratory for testing. The combination of guaiac and hydrogen peroxide cause the stool sample to change color. If blood is present in the stool, the color changes to blue.

Hematochezia is bright red blood in the stool, usually from the lower gastrointestinal tract, the colon or rectum.

Iron deficiency anemia is the most common type of anemia occurring when the body doesn't have enough iron, which the body needs to make hemoglobin.

Irritable bowel syndrome is a problem that affects the large intestine. It can cause abdominal cramping, bloating, and a change in bowel habits.

Megacolon is an abnormal dilation of the colon, not caused by mechanical obstruction. It is usually accompanied by symptoms such as abdominal discomfort. Megacolon can result in serious complications (colonic perforation, peritonitis, and/or sepsis) if left untreated.

Melena is the passage of dark tarry stools containing decomposing blood that is usually an indication of bleeding in the upper part of the digestive tract and especially the esophagus, stomach, and duodenum.

Polypectomy is the surgical removal of a polyp.

Sessile polyp is a polyp that grows flat on the tissue lining the organ, blending in and making it difficult to find and treat.

Sigmoid volvulus is the most common type of colonic volvulus and occurs when a portion of the intestine twists around its blood supply. In sigmoid volvulus, this occurs at the base of the mesentery.

Sigmoidoscopy is an examination of the sigmoid colon by means of a flexible tube inserted through the anus.



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Streptococcus bovis endocarditis is found as an organism in the human gut and may become opportunistically pathogenic. Infective endocarditis is one of the most common modes of presentation of this infection.

Ulcerative colitis is a chronic inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) in which abnormal reactions of the immune system cause inflammation and ulcers on the inner lining of the large intestine.

Disclaimer & Legal Notice

Purpose

The purpose of the HealthHelp's clinical guidelines is to assist healthcare professionals in selecting the medical service that may be appropriate and supported by evidence to safely improve outcomes. Medical information is constantly evolving, and HealthHelp reserves the right to review and update these clinical guidelines periodically. HealthHelp reserves the right to include in these guidelines the clinical indications as appropriate for the organization's program objectives. Therefore the guidelines are not a list of all the clinical indications for a stated procedure, and associated Procedure Code Tables may not represent all codes available for that state procedure or that are managed by a specific client-organization.

Clinician Review

These clinical guidelines neither preempt clinical judgment of trained professionals nor advise anyone on how to practice medicine. Healthcare professionals using these clinical guidelines are responsible for all clinical decisions based on their assessment. All Clinical Reviewers are instructed to apply clinical indications based on individual patient assessment and documentation, within the scope of their clinical license.

Payment

The use of these clinical guidelines does not provide authorization, certification, explanation of benefits, or guarantee of payment; nor do the guidelines substitute for, or constitute, medical advice. Federal and State law, as well as member benefit contract language (including definitions and specific contract provisions/exclusions) take precedence over clinical guidelines and must be considered first when determining eligibility for coverage. All final determinations on coverage and payment are the responsibility of the health plan. Nothing contained within this document can be interpreted to mean otherwise.



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