

Knee Arthroscopy Surgery

Medical Policy

Utilization Management

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I. DEFINITION:

Osteoarthritis is a disease of the articular cartilage. The exact cause of osteoarthritis is unknown. However if a joint is burdened by improper alignment, excessive weight, excessive activity, overuse, or injury, articular cartilage wears away. When cartilage loss occurs, there may ultimately come to be bone on bone contact. Changes in structures around the joint (e.g., muscles and tendons), fluid accumulation, and bony overgrowth (e.g., osteophytes or bone spurs) can develop. Articular cartilage has limited potential for regeneration or repair. There is no cure for osteoarthritis.

Osteoarthritis can affect any synovial joint. When it involves the knee joint it can cause severe chronic pain, loss of mobility, and disability. Treatment is focused on education, physical and occupational therapy, weight transfer modalities, joint protection and pharmacologic therapy. Patients with severe symptomatic osteoarthritis and limitation in activities of daily living should be referred to an orthopedic surgeon for evaluation. Knee joint replacement (i.e., knee arthroplasty) provides marked pain relief and functional improvement in the majority of patients with osteoarthritis of the knee. Prosthetic implants have a limited life expectancy depending upon an individual's age, weight, activity level and medical condition. Revision arthroplasty is difficult and outcomes of revision arthroplasty are not comparable to outcomes for primary arthroplasty.

Arthroscopy is a minimally invasive procedure that allows direct visualization of the interior of a joint. Knee arthroscopy allows orthopedic surgeons to assess and in some cases treat a range of conditions affecting the knee joint. Reconstruction of the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and repair of a torn meniscus are among the most commonly performed arthroscopic surgeries. Injuries to both the ACL and the menisci are common, particularly in young athletes. Torn menisci are also seen in older patients as the result of degeneration. Arthroscopic lavage and arthroscopic debridement have been proposed as options for patients with osteoarthritis of the knee to reduce pain and improve function thus postponing knee joint replacement.

II. **MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PLANS:**

Prior authorization is required through eviCore for all ages. To start prior authorization contact eviCore at 888-444-6185 or log on to www.evicore.com.

MyAdvocate Medicare Advantage follows Medicare guidelines when criteria are met.

[National Coverage Determination \(NCD\) for Arthroscopic Lavage and Arthroscopic Debridement for the Osteoarthritic Knee \(150.9\)](#)

<https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Guidance/Transmittals/downloads/r14ncd.pdf>

CMS Manual System
Pub. 100-03 Medicare National Coverage
Determinations

Nationally Non-covered Indications:

The clinical effectiveness of arthroscopic lavage and arthroscopic debridement for the severe osteoarthritic knee has not been verified by scientifically controlled studies. After thorough discussions with clinical investigators, the orthopedic community, and other interested parties, CMS determines that the following procedures are not considered reasonable or necessary in treatment of the osteoarthritic knee and are not covered by the Medicare program:

- A. Arthroscopic lavage used alone for the osteoarthritic knee;
- B. Arthroscopic debridement for osteoarthritic patients presenting with knee pain only;
- C. Arthroscopic debridement and lavage with or without debridement for patients presenting with severe osteoarthritis (Severe osteoarthritis is defined in the Outerbridge classification scale, grades III and IV. Outerbridge is the most commonly used clinical scale that classifies

the severity of joint degeneration of the knee by compartments and grades. Grade I is defined as softening or blistering of joint cartilage. Grade II is defined as fragmentation or fissuring in an area <1 cm. Grade III presents clinically with cartilage fragmentation or fissuring in an area >1 cm. Grade IV refers to cartilage erosion down to the bone. Grades III and IV are characteristic of severe osteoarthritis).

[MLN Matters Arthroscopic Lavage and Arthroscopic Debridement for the Osteoarthritic](#)

III. COMMENTS:

[Knee Arthroscopy Coding and Packaging Guidelines](#) (For MyAdvocate Medicare Advantage internal use only)

[Knee Arthroscopy ICD-10 Coding and Packaging Guidelines](#) (For MyAdvocate Medicare Advantage internal use only)

IV. REFERENCES:

Hayes, Inc. Health Technology Assessment. Verasense (OrthoSensor Inc.) For Use During Total Knee Arthroplasty. <https://evidence.hayesinc.com>. Published Sep 15, 2016. Updated Sep 20, 2018.