



## Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of Washington

### Clinical Review Criteria Spinal Manipulations – Chiropractic and Osteopathic

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### Criteria

#### For Medicare Members

Source	Policy
CMS Coverage Manuals	<a href="#">Medicare Benefit Policy Manual, Chapter 15 Section 30.5 - Chiropractor's Services and Section 240 Chiropractic Services - General</a>
National Coverage Determinations (NCD)	<a href="#">Manipulation (150.1)</a>
Local Coverage Determinations (LCD)	<a href="#">Chiropractic Services (L34009)</a> 12/31/2019 Noridian retired LCD Chiropractic Services (L34009). These services still need to meet medical necessity as outlined in the LCD and will require review. LCDs are retired due to lack of evidence of current problems, or in some cases because the material is addressed by a National Coverage Decision (NCD), a coverage provision in a CMS interpretative manual or an article. Most LCDs are not retired because they are incorrect. Therefore, continue to use LCD L34009 for determining medical necessity.
Local Coverage Article	<a href="#">Billing and Coding: Chiropractor Services (A57914)</a>

#### For Non-Medicare Members

When considering clinical information submitted for medical necessity review, the following data elements and corresponding details are evaluated to ensure correlation to the presenting diagnosis and proposed care plan\*:

- Chief Complaint(s)
- Past Medical History
- Mechanism of Onset
- Duration of Symptoms (acute or chronic)
- Evaluation and Re-evaluation findings
- Results of Diagnostic Testing
- Diagnostic Impression
- Complicating Factors (conditions or circumstances that may affect the patient's response to care)
- Prior and/or Concurrent History of Treatment
- Prognosis and Provider Comments

#### Manipulative Therapy\*

In establishing a fundamental need for manipulation, the treating provider must maintain a clinical record that includes an appropriate new and/ or established patient history and physical examination, and a goal-oriented care plan with measurable treatment goals. This collectively will be considered the key components of an evaluation and management service.

Examples of clinically significant improvement include, but are not limited to:

- Corresponding reduction and/or mitigation in subjective symptoms;

- Measured improvement in objective findings (i.e., orthopedic tests, neurologic signs, joint specific and region specific ranges of motion, musculoskeletal asymmetry at rest, palpation of tender and sensitive zones, tissue texture changes, muscle strength metrics); and
- A qualitative and/or quantifiable improvement in the patient's ability to perform specific functional tasks and/or activities of daily living as measured by the Patient-Specific Functional Scale (PSFS) or similar validated patient reported clinical outcome measure. For example, a clinically relevant improvement in the PSFS can be indicated by a change of at least 2 points in the average score of all activities or at least a 3-point change in a single activity over the reported baseline within a 4-week period.

For Manipulative therapy services, Medicare requires the primary diagnosis to be a spinal subluxation diagnosis code, followed by a secondary neuro-musculoskeletal diagnosis code. Medicare mandates that the physical exam must demonstrate a causal relationship between the spine and the patient's presenting complaint, which demonstrates medical necessity for spinal manipulation.

Medical necessity for manipulative therapy services should be supported by three elements of documentation:

- Presence of a spinal subluxation;
- Evidence of the subluxation by X-ray or physical examination; and
- Documentation of the initial and subsequent visits.

Medicare requires the acronym P.A.R.T. (Pain, Asymmetry, Range of Motion, and Tissue/Tone) must be used to describe the examination components indicating that a patient is suffering from a spinal condition amenable to manipulation. At least 2 of the 4 P.A.R.T. criteria must be met, with a least one of them being the "A" or "R" component.

\*Excerpted from Tivity WholeHealth Network [Clinical Criteria to Determine Medical Necessity: Physical Medicine Services](#) (reviewed and updated January, 2021)

**Take home equipment and supplies must follow Kaiser Permanente coverage rules and guidelines.**

See [Devices, Equipment and Supplies](#)

See [Compression Garments](#)

**If requesting this service, please send the following documentation to support medical necessity:**

- Last 6 months of clinical notes from requesting provider &/or specialist

The following information was used in the development of this document and is provided as background only. It is provided for historical purposes and does not necessarily reflect the most current published literature. When significant new articles are published that impact treatment option, Kaiser Permanente will review as needed. This information is not to be used as coverage criteria. Please only refer to the criteria listed above for coverage determinations.

## Background

Spinal manipulation is defined by chiropractors as "a specific form of direct articular manipulation utilizing a short lever and characterized by a dynamic, forceful, high velocity thrust of controlled amplitude" (Janse, 1975, as cited by Coulehan, 1985, p. 355). Chiropractors distinguish between chiropractic adjustments and spinal manipulation. Spinal manipulation is a generic term that refers to techniques used by osteopathic physicians, physiatrists (rehabilitation specialists), physiotherapists, or orthopedic surgeons. Spinal adjustment therapy usually involves more frequent visit than medical treatment for the same condition. (Coulehan, 1985).

Manual manipulation of the spine is composed of four elements: patient positioning, location of applied load, peak velocity of the load that is achieved, and peak load developed. The total displacement of the body segments is believed to be properly controlled by a combination of patient positioning and peak load. Techniques used by chiropractors to augment the manipulation may include mobilization, manual traction, soft-tissue massage, and pressure-point techniques (Haldeman, 1983).

Spinal manipulation and adjunct therapies (physical therapy) have been demonstrated to be effective when delivered alone, but no therapy has been consistently demonstrated to be more effective than the other modalities. A 2011 Cochrane Back Group review of 26 randomized controlled trials with 6070 participants (9 studies with low bias) found high quality evidence that spinal manipulative therapy for low back pain indicates provides clinically relevant, statistically significant short-term effect on pain relief as compared to other interventions, including exercise therapy, standard medical care or physical therapy. (Rubinstein, 26Feb2011) The reviewers note that spinal manipulation appears to be no better or no worse than other existing therapies for

pain relief. This review affirms the 2008 Cochrane Database Review of Spinal Manipulative Therapy for low-back pain results indicating no evidence that spinal manipulative therapy is superior to other standard treatments (physical therapy, exercises, back school, general physician care) for pain relief or improved functional outcomes. (Assendelft, et al., Cochrane Library Review, 8Oct2011)

There is mixed evidence on the clinical effectiveness of adjunct modalities, including physical therapy and rehabilitative services and durable medical equipment and supplies, when delivered concurrently with spinal manipulation.

An April 2010 Cochrane Back Group Review of combined chiropractic interventions demonstrated slightly improved pain and disability for patients with acute and subacute back pain in the short term. No difference was demonstrated for combined chiropractic interventions for chronic lower back pain and for studies that had a mixed population of lower back pain. Any demonstrated differences were small and were only seen in studies with a high risk of bias. For acute and subacute LBP, chiropractic interventions improved short- and medium-term pain (SMD -0.25 (95% CI -0.46 to -0.04) and MD -0.89 (95%CI -1.60 to -0.18)) compared to other treatments, but there was no significant difference in long-term pain (MD -0.46 (95% CI -1.18 to 0.26)). Short-term improvement in disability was greater in the chiropractic group compared to other therapies (SMD -0.36 (95% CI -0.70 to -0.02)). However, the effect was small and all studies contributing to these results had high risk of bias. There was no difference in medium- and long-term disability. (Walker, 14APR2010)

In a randomized controlled trial of chiropractic care (flexion distraction) or physical therapy (exercise program), Cambron found that subjects in both groups had decreased pain and disability regardless of which therapy was utilized ( $p < .002$ ). During the year after care, chiropractic subjects had significantly lower pain scores ( $p = .002$ ) and received fewer visits but experienced no difference in timing of care following intervention when compared to those in physical therapy treatment. Physical therapy subjects attended significantly more health care visits than subjects who received chiropractic care only. (Cambron, Cochrane Register of Controlled Trials, Chiropractic care vs medical care for low back pain: Assessment of long-term follow-up data, 2005).

## Evidence and Source Documents

Hayes Report, Chiropractic Treatment of Low Back Pain, May 26, 1999

Spinal Manipulative Therapy for Chronic Low Back Pain, The Cochrane Library. Rubinstein, SM, van Middelkoop, M, Assendelft, WJJ, de Boer, MR, vanTulder, MW. 8 Oct 2011 online publication.

Walker B, French S, Grant W, Green S, Cochrane Library Review of Combined Chiropractic Interventions for Low Back Pain, 14APR2010 online publication.

Cambron JA, Cochrane Register of Controlled Trials, Chiropractic care vs medical care for low back pain: Assessment of long-term follow-up data, 2005.

## Applicable Codes

**Considered Medically Necessary when criteria in the applicable policy statements listed above are met:**

CPT® Codes	Description
98925	Osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT); 1-2 body regions involved
98926	Osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT); 3-4 body regions involved
98927	Osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT); 5-6 body regions involved
98928	Osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT); 7-8 body regions involved
98929	Osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT); 9-10 body regions involved
98940	Chiropractic manipulative treatment (CMT); spinal, 1-2 regions
98941	Chiropractic manipulative treatment (CMT); spinal, 3-4 regions
98942	Chiropractic manipulative treatment (CMT); spinal, 5 regions
98943	Chiropractic manipulative treatment (CMT); extraspinal, 1 or more regions

**\*Note:** Codes may not be all-inclusive. Deleted codes and codes not in effect at the time of service may not be covered.

**\*\*To verify authorization requirements for a specific code by plan type, please use the [Pre-authorization Code Check](#).**

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Date Created	Date Reviewed	Date Last Revised
02/10/2000	10/05/2010 <sup>MDCRPC</sup> , 08/02/2011 <sup>MDCRPC</sup> , 06/05/2012 <sup>MDCRPC</sup> , 10/02/2012 <sup>MDCRPC</sup> , 08/06/2013 <sup>MPC</sup> , 06/03/2014 <sup>MPC</sup> , 04/07/2015 <sup>MPC</sup> , 03/01/2016 <sup>MPC</sup> , 01/03/2017 <sup>MPC</sup> , 11/07/2017 <sup>MPC</sup> , 09/04/2018 <sup>MPC</sup> , 09/03/2019 <sup>MPC</sup> , 09/01/2020 <sup>MPC</sup> , 09/07/2021 <sup>MPC</sup> , 09/06/2022 <sup>MPC</sup> , 09/05/2023 <sup>MPC</sup> , 11/05/2024 <sup>MPC</sup>	12/21/2023

<sup>MDCRPC</sup> Medical Director Clinical Review and Policy Committee

<sup>MPC</sup> Medical Policy Committee

Revision History	Description
05/05/2015	The chiropractic policy was modified. The Healthways Clinical Criteria for Chiropractic Services was adopted as GHC policy.
09/08/2015	Revised LCD L34009
09/07/2021	Updated Tivity criteria reference for manipulative therapy.
12/21/2023	Added NCD Manipulation (150.1)