Functional Endoscopic Sinus Surgery (FESS)

Description of Procedure or Service

Chronic sinusitis is one of the most frequently diagnosed chronic medical conditions, even more so than hypertension and arthritis. A course of conservative medical therapy is attempted initially to resolve the symptoms; this treatment may include antibiotics, nasal irrigation, decongestants, and steroids.

Functional endoscopic sinus surgery (FESS) is the most commonly used surgical technique to treat medically unresponsive chronic sinusitis and other serious conditions of the nasal sinuses that result in impaired sinus drainage. The use of the endoscope permits a better view of the surgical field. Goals of FESS are to allow for maximum preservation of mucosa, and to open and enlarge the sinus passageways allowing for proper drainage.

FESS is performed using a rigid endoscope to view the structures of the nose and sinuses. The endoscope is inserted through the nose, as are the tiny surgical instruments the surgeon uses to perform the surgery. The procedure can be performed under general or local anesthesia on an outpatient basis, and patients usually experience minimal discomfort. The use of FESS allows for a much less invasive and traumatic procedure than conventional sinus surgery. There are shorter surgery and healing times, less postoperative discomfort, and fewer surgical complications with FESS. However, because of the proximity of sinus structures to the eyes and the brain, it is not risk free.

Some form of sinus packing is generally performed postoperatively. Simple dressings moistened with saline can be inserted manually following surgery. Foam dressings are polysaccharide substances that form a gel when hydrated and can be used as nasal packs for a variety of indications. Middle meatal spacers are splint-like devices that prop open the sinus cavities post-FESS, but are not capable of drug delivery. There is some RCT evidence that middle meatal spacers may reduce the formation of synechiae following FESS, although the available studies have significant heterogeneity in this outcome.

Implantable drug-eluting sinus implants are another option for postoperative management following FESS and other sinus procedures. These implants are inserted under endoscopic guidance to stabilize the sinus openings and the turbinates, reduce edema, and/or prevent obstruction by adhesions. They also deliver medications (e.g. steroids) topically over an extended period of time (e.g. 30 days), and this local delivery of medications may be superior to other treatment options in the postoperative setting.

The only U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved drug-eluting sinus implant at this time is Propel™ (mometasone furoate sinus implant). There are numerous other stenting and packing materials commonly used in sinus surgery. This policy does not apply to the use of those materials.

Related policy: Balloon Sinuplasty for Treatment of Chronic Sinusitis

***Note: This Medical Policy is complex and technical. For questions concerning the technical language and/or specific clinical indications for its use, please consult your physician.
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Policy

BCBSNC will cover functional endoscopic sinus surgery (FESS) and the use of a mometasone furoate sinus implant when determined to be medically necessary because the medical criteria and guidelines shown below are met.

Benefits Application

This medical policy relates only to the services or supplies described herein. Please refer to the Member's Benefit Booklet for availability of benefits. Member's benefits may vary according to benefit design; therefore member benefit language should be reviewed before applying the terms of this medical policy.

When Functional Endoscopic Sinus Surgery (FESS) and the use of a mometasone furoate sinus implant are covered

Functional endoscopic sinus surgery is considered medically necessary for the treatment of sinusitis, polyposis, sinus tumor, or other conditions listed below when any one or more of the following circumstances is present:

1. Uncomplicated sinusitis and all of the following:
   a. Either four or more documented episodes of acute rhinosinusitis in one year, or chronic sinusitis that interferes with lifestyle; and,
   b. Optimal medical therapy has been attempted and failed; and,
   c. For chronic rhinosinusitis, documentation of coronal CT and/or nasal endoscopy following optimal medical therapy showing persistent sinus pathology; and,
   d. For recurrent acute rhinosinusitis, coronal CT and nasal endoscopy may be normal after treatment. However, CT and/or nasal endoscopy during acute rhinosinusitis should document sinus pathology amenable to surgical treatment.

2. Multiple or recurrent polyps with airway obstruction and failure of optimal medical management (including assessment for allergy symptoms and allergy evaluation if indicated) with persistent sinus disease on follow up CT scan and/or nasal endoscopy,

3. Complications of sinusitis, including extension to adjacent structures,

4. Chronic headache or facial pain caused by a demonstrable anatomic or pathologic sinus disorder,

5. Mucocele (excludes benign, asymptomatic mucus retention cysts),

6. Recurrent sinusitis with significant associated comorbid conditions (some examples include immune system disorders, and congenital or acquired ciliary dyskinesia),

7. Recurrent sinusitis which exacerbates significant comorbid conditions (including but not limited to asthma, recurrent bronchitis or pneumonia, diabetes),

8. Multidrug resistant organisms identified by culture,

9. Sinonasal benign or malignant tumor (including inverted papilloma),
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10. Cerebrospinal fluid leak (CSF leak),

11. Dacryocystorhinostomy (DCR) for disorders of the lacrimal system,

12. Orbital decompression,

13. Repair of choanal atresia.

The use of a mometasone furoate sinus implant (Propel™) is considered medically necessary following functional endoscopic sinus surgery (FESS) or other sinus procedure when the following criteria are met:

1. Patient is > 18 years of age; AND
2. Ethmoid sinus surgery is planned; AND
3. Patient has one or more of the following conditions:
   a. Polypoid disease
   b. Failed prior surgery and/or restenosis
   c. Absolute or relative contraindication to systemic steroids
4. The functional endoscopic sinus surgery (FESS) or other primary sinus procedure is considered medically necessary.

When Functional Endoscopic Sinus Surgery (FESS) and the use of a mometasone furoate sinus implant are not covered

FESS is not covered as an adjunct to nasal septal and/or turbinate surgery in the absence of the above clinical indications. Optimal medical management, when indicated, must have been attempted, and failed to resolve the patient’s condition.

Functional endoscopic sinus surgery is considered not medically necessary for the treatment of sinusitis or polyposis when the criteria above are not met.

The use of a mometasone furoate sinus implant (Propel™) is considered not medically necessary when the criteria above are not met.

A mometasone furoate sinus implant (Propel™) is contraindicated when:
- Patient has suspected or confirmed intolerance to mometasone furoate.
- Patient has a known hypersensitivity to lactide, glycolide, or caprolactone copolymers.

Policy Guidelines

Functional endoscopic sinus surgery (FESS) should be reserved for use in patients in whom optimal medical treatment has failed. The majority of patients with sinusitis do not require surgery. Their sinus symptoms can usually be successfully treated medically, including antibiotic therapy and other medications, treatment of allergy, and environmental control.

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Note: Imaging studies should be generally obtained after maximal medical therapy. Based on clinical situation (i.e., concern for extrasinus complications or neoplasm), early or emergent imaging may be required to confirm a diagnosis.

Drug-eluting sinus implants have been used post-FESS with the intent of maintaining patency of the sinuses and delivering local steroids. Two RCTs have compared the Propel™ device with steroids to the same device without steroids, and reported that the steroid-eluting device reduced postoperative inflammation, reduced the need for oral steroids, and reduced the need for postoperative re-interventions. These trials evaluate the benefit of local steroid delivery in addition to standard care. The improvements reported in these trials reflect the impact of local steroid delivery, which was withheld in the control arm, as well as the impact of the stent device itself.

Billing/Coding/Physician Documentation Information

This policy may apply to the following codes. Inclusion of a code in this section does not guarantee that it will be reimbursed. For further information on reimbursement guidelines, please see Administrative Policies on the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina web site at www.bcbsnc.com. They are listed in the Category Search on the Medical Policy search page.

Applicable codes: 31254, 31255, 31256, 31267, 31276, 31287, 31288, S1090, S2342

If Balloon Sinuplasty is performed in conjunction with FESS it will be considered incidental to the major service and not eligible for separate reimbursement. Refer to policy titled, “Balloon Sinuplasty for Treatment of Chronic Sinusitis.”

BCBSNC may request medical records for determination of medical necessity. When medical records are requested, letters of support and/or explanation are often useful, but are not sufficient documentation unless all specific information needed to make a medical necessity determination is included.

Medical Term Definitions

Dacryocystorhinostomy
a surgical procedure to restore the flow of tears into the nose from the lacrimal sac when the nasolacrimal duct does not function.

Sinus Mucocele
a mucous collection lined by the mucous-secreting epithelium of a paranasal sinus, whose primary opening is usually obstructed. Thus, the entire sinus cavity is mucous filled. This leads to outward expansion with bone remodeling.

Mucous Retention Cyst
a mucous collection lined by a mucous-secreting epithelium that forms when a small number of mucous glands within a sinus become obstructed. Its walls are defined by the epithelium of the mucous glands, not by the entire sinus. There is almost always air still surrounding a retention cyst, and bone expansion and remodeling of the sinus does not often occur.

Scientific Background and Reference Sources

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National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Sinus Infection (Sinusitis). Available at: http://www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/sinusitis/Pages/Index.aspx

Medical Director review 2/2010

Medical Director review 7/2010


Medical Director review 6/2012


Functional Endoscopic Sinus Surgery (FESS)

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Senior Medical Director review 4/2014

Policy Implementation/Update Information

3/30/2010  New policy issued. BCBSNC will cover functional endoscopic sinus surgery (FESS) when determined to be medically necessary because the medical criteria and guidelines outlined in the policy are met. Notification given 3/30/10 for effective date 7/1/10. (adn)

7/6/2010  Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel review 5/24/10. No change to policy statement or coverage criteria. (adn)

7/20/2010  Minor changes in Description section. In the When FESS is covered section: Revised Item 1.c. to read “For chronic rhinosinusitis, documentation of coronal CT and/or nasal endoscopy following optimal medical therapy showing persistent sinus pathology.” Added item 1.d. which reads “For recurrent acute rhinosinusitis, coronal CT and nasal endoscopy may be normal after treatment. However, CT and/or nasal endoscopy during acute rhinosinusitis should document sinus pathology amenable to surgical treatment.” Revised Item 2 to read “Multiple or recurrent polyps with airway obstruction and failure of optimal medical management (including assessment for allergy symptoms, and allergy evaluation if indicated) with persistent sinus disease on follow up CT scan and/or nasal endoscopy.” Revised Item 4 to read “Chronic anterior headache or facial pain...” Inserted new items 6, 7 and 8 which read “6) Recurrent sinusitis with significant associated comorbid conditions (some examples include immune system disorders, and congenital or acquired ciliary dyskinesia), 7) Recurrent sinusitis which exacerbates significant comorbid conditions (including but not limited to asthma, recurrent bronchitis or pneumonia, diabetes), and 8) Multidrug resistant organisms identified by culture. Revised newly numbered Item 9 to read “Sinonasal benign or malignant tumor (including inverted papilloma).” In the Policy Guidelines section, revised item 3.f. to read “antibiotic therapy consisting of three consecutive weeks of appropriate antibiotic drugs. OR multiple two to three week courses of appropriate antibiotic drugs during the symptomatic periods.” CPT Codes 31237 and 31240 deleted from the Billing/Coding section. (adn)
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9/13/11  Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel review 8/31/11. No change to policy statement or medical criteria. (adn)

6/29/12  Code S1090 added to policy. “The use of a Propel sinus implant may be considered medically necessary when the following criteria are met: 1. Implanted at the time of approved functional endoscopic sinus surgery, and 2. Implanted in the ethmoid sinus only” added to the When Covered section. “Use of the Propel sinus implant is considered not medically necessary if inserted at any surgical setting other than the FESS procedure, or for any sinus cavities other than the ethmoid” added to the When Not Covered section. (sk)

7/24/12  Added information regarding implantable sinus stents/spacers for postoperative use following endoscopic sinus surgery to the Description section and to the Policy Guidelines section. Added “The use of implantable sinus stents/spacers for postoperative treatment following endoscopic sinus surgery is considered investigational. BCBSNC does not cover investigational services or supplies” to the When Not Covered section. References added. (sk)

11/13/12  Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel review 8/15/12. Additional pediatric information added to Policy Guidelines. No change to policy statement. (sk)

11/12/13  Reference added. Existing references updated. Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel review 8/21/13. Medical Director review. No change to policy statement. (sk)

2/25/14  Reference added. The word “spacer removed from its association with the word “stent” throughout the policy. No change to Policy intent. (sk)

7/15/14  Description section updated to include general information on drug-eluting sinus implants and specific information on the Propel™ sinus implant. Medical necessity criteria for use of a mometasone furoate sinus implant added to When Covered section. Not medically necessary criteria for use of a mometasone furoate sinus implant added to When Not Covered section. Policy Guidelines updated. (sk)

Medical policy is not an authorization, certification, explanation of benefits or a contract. Benefits and eligibility are determined before medical guidelines and payment guidelines are applied. Benefits are determined by the group contract and subscriber certificate that is in effect at the time services are rendered. This document is solely provided for informational purposes only and is based on research of current medical literature and review of common medical practices in the treatment and diagnosis of disease. Medical practices and knowledge are constantly changing and BCBSNC reserves the right to review and revise its medical policies periodically.