

Chronic Pain Management

Dr. Patris Almasi

Table of Contents

- 1) Procedure Insurance Guidelines (scroll down)
- 2) Home exercise programs

References for Guidelines

[Medicare - MBB/RFA](#) - click Coverage Guidance on left-hand menu

[Medicare - ESI](#)

[Medicare - SCS](#)

[NIA Guidelines](#) (Amerigroup, Caresource, Peach State, Centene, Welcare)

Procedure Guidelines (1/30/24)

Medial Branch Blocks (MBB)

- axial LBP for ≥ 3 months
- moderate to severe pain (Pain score $\geq 6/10$)
- absence of *untreated* radiculopathy
- failure of conservative mgmt
- no fracture, tumor, infection, deformity on imaging
- must specify joints i.e. L4/L5 and L5/S1
 - do NOT write L3-SA or C2-C5
- exam must state +lumbar/cervical facet loading
- can expedite next procedure if pt is called next day with documented relief
- Four MBBs allowed per 12 months
- Preferably state that “RFA is being considered as the primary treatment goal.”

Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)

- need MBB x2 with $\geq 80\%$ relief x duration
 - must designate levels and laterality i.e. RIGHT L4/L5 and L5/S1
 - failure of conservative mgmt
 - Two RFA allowed per 12 months. Consider bilateral RFA.
 - Avoid surgically fused levels
- REPEAT RFA
- may be repeated after 6 months but less than 2 years
 - must document that prior RFA provided $\geq 50\%$ relief x 6 months or 50% improvement in ADLs
 - if greater than 2 years, must repeat MBB x2

Epidural Steroid Injection (ESI)

- H&P must indicate diagnosis
 - Pain score $\geq 6/10$ and severe enough to affect ADLs
 - failure of conservative mgmt x 4 weeks
 - does not apply to Shingles pain
- REPEAT ESI
- indicated if initial injection provided at least 50% relief x 3 months
 - if initial injection provided a *suboptimal* response (i.e. less than 50%), a 2nd injection can be performed using a different level/approach. **Must** clearly document.
 - Most other insurances allow repeat ESI every 2 months.
 - Four ESI allowed per 12 months

Conservative Management

Examples: rest, acupuncture, physical therapy, home exercise, heat and cold compresses, massage, chiropractor, medications (including NSAIDs, antidepressants, neuropathic agents, muscle relaxants, steroids, opioids), weight loss, smoking cessation, sleep hygiene, nutrition changes

Exception: Pt cannot tolerate PT due to severe pain. *

Home Exercise Programs

Low back pain

- [Mayo Clinic HEP](#)
- [Benchmark HEP](#)

Neck pain

- [Option 1](#) (Mayfield Brain & Spine)
- [Option 2](#) (Kaiser)
- [Option 3](#) (Advocate Aurora Health)

Shoulder pain

- [Basic Option](#) (Kaiser)
- [Advanced Option](#) (Ortho)
- [Scapular Pain](#)

Knee Pain

- [Orthopedics](#)