

Clinical Policy: Sclerotherapy for Varicose Veins

Reference Number: CP.MP.146

Last Review Date: 04/19

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Description

Sclerotherapy is a minimally invasive procedure to diminish abnormally dilated and symptomatic veins. In this procedure, liquid, foam, or glue irritants are injected into unwanted veins, causing their eventual reduction. This policy describes the medical necessity requirements for sclerotherapy.

Policy/Criteria

- I. It is the policy of health plans affiliated with Centene Corporation® that sclerotherapy using liquid or foam irritants is **medically necessary** for the following indications:
 - A. Symptomatic varicose veins, including all of the following criteria:
 1. Ultrasound-documented saphenous varicosities at the saphenofemoral junction or saphenopopliteal junction, including both of the following:
 - a. Junctional reflux \geq 500 milliseconds;
 - b. Vein size \geq 2.5 mm;
 2. Complications attributed to the varicosities, including any of the following:
 - a. Intractable ulceration;
 - b. Hemorrhage or recurrent bleeding episodes from a ruptured varicosity;
 - c. Recurrent superficial thrombophlebitis;
 - d. Severe and persistent pain and swelling, including both of the following:
 - i. Duration \geq 6 months;
 - ii. Failure of \geq 3 months of conservative treatment including compression therapy, unless contraindicated (i.e., suspected or proven peripheral arterial disease, severe peripheral neuropathy, etc.);
 3. Does NOT include any of the following contraindications:
 - a. Previous administration of sclerotherapy agent $<$ 6 weeks prior;
 - b. Allergy to sclerotherapy agent;
 - c. Pregnant or within 3 months after delivery;
 - d. Acute febrile illness;
 - e. Local or general infection;
 - f. Severe distal arterial occlusive disease (ankle-brachial index 0.4 or less);
 - g. Critical limb ischemia, arterial ulcer(s), gangrene;
 - h. Obliteration of deep venous system;
 - i. Recent deep venous thrombosis;
 - j. Acute deep venous thrombophlebitis or acute superficial thrombophlebitis;
 - k. Inability to ambulate;
 - l. Tortuosity of the great saphenous vein severe enough to impede catheter placement;
 - m. Klippel-Trenaunay Syndrome or other congenital venous abnormalities.

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II. It is the policy of health plans affiliated with Centene Corporation that sclerotherapy is **not medically necessary** for any of the following indications:

- A. Asymptomatic varicose veins
 - 1. Superficial reticular veins and/or telangiectasias;
- B. For the treatment of all other conditions than those specified above.

III. It is the policy of health plans affiliated with Centene Corporation that cyanoacrylate adhesive is considered investigational for the treatment of varicose veins.

Background

Varicose veins can cause significant pain and discomfort, superficial thrombophlebitis, bleeding, and ulceration. As such, chronic venous insufficiency, including symptomatic varicosities, can have a substantial negative impact on quality of life.¹ The pathophysiology that leads to these varicosities include inadequate muscle pump function, incompetent venous valves (reflux), and venous obstruction.²

According to clinical practice guidelines by the Society for Vascular Surgery and the American Venous Forum, sclerotherapy is a recommended treatment option for varicose veins.⁴

Sclerotherapy is a minimally invasive and cost effective procedure used to treat varicose veins. To perform this procedure, chemical irritants are injected into the unwanted vein to close varicosities. Destruction of venous endothelial cells and the formation of a fibrotic obstruction facilitate the venous closure due to injection of sclerosing agents. Liquid and foam sclerotherapy are the two predominant modalities for the introduction of sclerosing agents; examples of such sclerosing agents include osmotic, alcohol and detergent agents.^{3,4} A systemic review by Tisi *et al* evaluated 17 randomized controlled trials, and concluded that choice of sclerosing agents, dose, formulation (foam versus liquid), among other factors lack a significant effect on the efficacy of sclerotherapy for varicose veins.⁶

Although cyanoacrylate adhesive has been introduced as an injectable agent for use in sclerotherapy, future follow-up studies are needed to support the efficacy and safety in treatment of varicose veins. The notable literature currently consists of a retrospective and a prospective study without randomization.^{7,9} Further long-term studies are needed to support the use of cyanoacrylate prior to integration into medical necessity guidelines.

Coding Implications

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CPT® Codes	Description
36465	Injection of non-compounded foam sclerosant with ultrasound compression maneuvers to guide dispersion of the injectate, inclusive of all imaging guidance and monitoring; single incompetent extremity truncal vein (eg, great saphenous vein, accessory saphenous vein)
36466	Injection of non-compounded foam sclerosant with ultrasound compression maneuvers to guide dispersion of the injectate, inclusive of all imaging guidance and monitoring; multiple incompetent truncal veins (eg, great saphenous vein, accessory saphenous vein), same leg.
36470	Injection of sclerosant; single incompetent vein (other than telangiectasia)
36471	Injection of sclerosant; multiple incompetent veins (other than telangiectasia), same leg

Reviews, Revisions, and Approvals	Date	Approval Date
New policy	05/17	06/17
References reviewed and updated. CPT codes updated.	04/18	04/18
Updated description to include mention of glue irritants. Added contraindication for previous administration of sclerotherapy and syndrome/congenital abnormalities. In "I." added stipulation that liquid or foam agents to be used in sclerotherapy. Added statement that cyanoacrylate adhesive is investigational with supporting background information. In I.A.2.d. removed failure of ≥3 weeks prescription dose analgesic medications for pain and added failure of ≥ 3 months of conservative treatment including compression therapy unless contraindicated.	03/19	04/19

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Important Reminder

This clinical policy has been developed by appropriately experienced and licensed health care professionals based on a review and consideration of currently available generally accepted standards of medical practice; peer-reviewed medical literature; government agency/program approval status; evidence-based guidelines and positions of leading national health professional organizations; views of physicians practicing in relevant clinical areas affected by this clinical policy; and other available clinical information. The Health Plan makes no representations and accepts no liability with respect to the content of any external information used or relied upon in developing this clinical policy. This clinical policy is consistent with standards of medical practice current at the time that this clinical policy was approved. “Health Plan” means a health plan that has adopted this clinical policy and that is operated or administered, in whole or in part, by Centene Management Company, LLC, or any of such health plan’s affiliates, as applicable.

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Note: For Medicare members, to ensure consistency with the Medicare National Coverage Determinations (NCD) and Local Coverage Determinations (LCD), all applicable NCDs, LCDs, and Medicare Coverage Articles should be reviewed prior to applying the criteria set forth in this clinical policy. Refer to the CMS website at <http://www.cms.gov> for additional information.

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