



May 26, 2009

Blue Cross medical policy regarding intra-articular hyaluronan injections for osteoarthritis

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and Blue Plus medical policy II-29, intra-articular hyaluronan injections for osteoarthritis states:

A course of 3 to 5 weekly injections of intra-articular hyaluronan injections may be considered medically necessary for the treatment of painful osteoarthritis of the knee in patients who have insufficient pain relief from conservative nonpharmacologic therapy and simple analgesics.

Repeated courses of intra-articular hyaluronan injections may be considered medically necessary under both of the following conditions:

- Significant pain relief achieved with the prior course of injections
- At least 6 months have passed since the prior course

The use of intra-articular hyaluronan injections into joints other than the knee is considered **investigative and not medically necessary**.

Coverage

Prior authorization is not required. However, services with specific coverage criteria may be reviewed retrospectively to determine if criteria are being met. Retrospective denial of claims may result if criteria are not met.

The FDA-approved single dose injection of intra-articular hyaluronan (i.e., Synvisc-One) may be used in lieu of the course of 3 to 5 weekly injections when the medical policy criteria stated above has been met.

Claim audits

Routine claim audits have disclosed occurrences where some providers have been submitting claims for therapies considered investigative and not medically necessary.

Adherence and enforcement of policy

This bulletin is a reminder that providers must abide by the requirements of all medical policies. Blue Cross is taking action to enforce Medical Policy II-29. Claims for the use of intra-articular hyaluronan injections into joints other than the knee will be subject to retrospective review and denial as investigative services are not eligible for reimbursement.

To view medical policies go to **providers.bluecrossmn.com** and select “medical policy” under “tools & resources.”

Questions?

If you have questions, please contact provider service at **(651) 662-5200** or **1-800-262-0820**.