



UnitedHealthcare® Community Plan: *Radiology Imaging Coverage Determination Guideline*

Adult Neck Imaging Guidelines (For Ohio Only)

V1.0.2023

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Application (for Ohio Only)

This Medical Policy only applies to the state of Ohio. Any requests for services that are stated as unproven or services for which there is a coverage or quantity limit will be evaluated for medical necessity using Ohio Administrative Code 5160-1-01.

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Related Community Plan Policies
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Application (For Ohio Only)

Guideline Development (Preface-1)

Guideline

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Guideline Development (Preface-1.1)

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- The UnitedHealthcare's evidence-based, proprietary clinical guidelines evaluate a range of advanced imaging and procedures, including NM, US, CT, MRI, PET, Radiation Oncology, Sleep Studies, as well as Cardiac, musculoskeletal and Spine interventions.
- UnitedHealthcare reserves the right to change and update the guidelines. The guidelines undergo a formal review annually. United HealthCare's guidelines are based upon major national and international association and society guidelines and criteria, peer-reviewed literature, major treatises as well as, input from health plans, and practicing academic and community-based physicians.
- These Guidelines are not intended to supersede or replace sound medical judgment, but instead, should facilitate the identification of the most appropriate imaging or other designated procedure given the individual's clinical condition. These guidelines are written to cover medical conditions as experienced by the majority of individuals. However, these guidelines may not be applicable in certain clinical circumstances, and physician judgment can override the guidelines.
- Clinical decisions, including treatment decisions, are the responsibility of the individual and his/her provider. Clinicians are expected to use independent medical judgment, which takes into account the clinical circumstances to determine individual management decisions.
- UnitedHealthcare supports the Choosing Wisely initiative (<https://www.choosingwisely.org/>) by the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) Foundation and many national physician organizations, to reduce the overuse of diagnostic tests that are low value, no value, or whose risks are greater than the benefits.

Benefits, Coverage Policies, and Eligibility Issues (Preface-2)

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Benefits, Coverage Policies, and Eligibility Issues (Preface-2.1)

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Benefits, Coverage Policies, and Eligibility Issues (Preface-2.1)

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Investigational and Experimental Studies

- Certain advanced imaging studies, or other procedures, may be considered investigational and experimental if there is a paucity of supporting evidence; if the evidence has not matured to exhibit improved health parameters or; the advanced imaging study/procedure lacks a collective opinion of support.

Clinical and Research Trials

- Similar to investigational and experimental studies, clinical trial imaging requests will be considered to determine whether they meet UnitedHealthcare's evidence-based guidelines.
- Imaging studies which are inconsistent with established clinical standards, or are requested for data collection and not used in direct clinical management are not supported.

Legislative Mandate

- State and federal legislations may need to be considered in the review of advanced imaging requests.

References (Preface-2)

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1. Coverage of Clinical Trials under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; 42 U.S.C.A. § 300gg-8

Clinical Information (Preface-3)

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Clinical Information (Preface-3.1)

References (Preface-3)

Clinical Information (Preface-3.1)

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Clinical Documentation and Age Considerations

- UnitedHealthcare’s guidelines use an evidence-based approach to determine the most appropriate procedure for each individual, at the most appropriate time in the diagnostic and treatment cycle. UnitedHealthcare’s guidelines are framed by:
 - Clinical presentation of the individual, rather than the studies requested
 - Adequate clinical information that must be submitted to UnitedHealthcare in order to establish medical necessity for advanced imaging or other designated procedures includes, but is not limited to the following:
 - Pertinent clinical evaluation should include a recent detailed history, physical examination²⁰ since the onset or change in symptoms, and/or laboratory and prior imaging studies.
 - Condition-specific guideline sections may describe additional clinical information which is required for a pertinent clinical evaluation.
 - The Spine and Musculoskeletal guidelines require x-ray studies from when the current episode of symptoms has started or changed; x-ray imaging does not have to be within the past 60 days.
 - Advanced imaging or other designated procedures should not be ordered prior to clinical evaluation of an individual by the physician treating the individual. This may include referral to a consultant specialist who will make further treatment decisions.
 - Other meaningful technological contact (telehealth visit, telephone or video call, electronic mail or messaging) since the onset or change in symptoms by an established individual can serve as a pertinent clinical evaluation.
 - Some conditions may require a face-to-face evaluation as discussed in the applicable condition-specific guideline sections.
 - A recent clinical evaluation may be unnecessary if the individual is undergoing a guideline-supported, scheduled follow-up imaging or other designated procedural evaluation. Exceptions due to routine surveillance indications are addressed in the applicable condition-specific guideline sections.
 - UnitedHealthcare’s evidence-based approach to determine the most appropriate procedure for each individual requires submission of medical records pertinent to the requested imaging or other designated procedures.
- Many conditions affecting the pediatric population are different diagnoses than those occurring in the adult population. For those diseases which occur in both pediatric and adult populations, minor differences may exist in management due to

individual age, comorbidities, and differences in disease natural history between children and adults.

- Individuals who are 18 years old or younger¹⁹ should be imaged according to the Pediatric Imaging Guidelines if discussed in the condition-specific guideline sections. Any conditions not specifically discussed in the Pediatric Imaging Guidelines should be imaged according to the General Imaging Guidelines. Individuals who are >18 years old should be imaged according to the General Imaging Guidelines, except where directed otherwise by a specific guideline section.
- The terms “male” and “female” used in these guidelines refer to anatomic-specific diseases and disease predispositions associated with individuals’ sex assigned at birth rather than their gender identity. It should be noted that gender identity and anatomic-specific diseases as well as disease predispositions are not always linked. As such, these guidelines should be applied to the individual’s corresponding known or suspected anatomic-specific disease or disease predisposition. At UnitedHealthcare, we believe that it is important to understand how all individuals, including those who are gender-diverse, choose to identify themselves. To ensure that gender-diverse individuals are treated with respect and that decisions impacting their healthcare are made correctly and with sensitivity, UnitedHealthcare recognizes all individuals with the following gender marker options: Male, Female, Transgender male, Transgender female, “X,” and “Not specified.”

General Imaging Information

- “Standard” or “conventional” imaging is most often performed in the initial and subsequent evaluations of malignancy. Standard or conventional imaging includes plain film, CT, MRI, or US.
 - Often, further advanced imaging is needed when initial imaging, such as ultrasound, CT, or MRI does not answer the clinical question. Uncertain, indeterminate, inconclusive, or equivocal may describe these situations.
- Appropriate use of contrast is a very important component of evidence-based advanced imaging use.
 - The appropriate levels of contrast for an examination (i.e. without contrast, with contrast, without and with contrast) is determined by the evidence-based guidance reflected in the condition-specific guideline sections.
 - If, during the performance of a non-contrast imaging study, there is the unexpected need to use contrast in order to evaluate a possible abnormality, then that is appropriate.¹

Ultrasound

- Diagnostic ultrasound uses high frequency sound waves to evaluate soft tissue structures and vascular structures utilizing greyscale and Doppler techniques.
- Ultrasound allows for dynamic real-time imaging at the bedside

- Ultrasound is limited in areas where there is dense bone or other calcification.
- Ultrasound also has a relatively limited imaging window so may be of limited value to evaluate very large abnormalities
- In general, ultrasound is highly operator-dependent, and proper training and experience are required to perform consistent, high-quality evaluations.
- Indications for ultrasound may include, but are not limited to:
 - Obstetric and gynecologic imaging
 - Soft tissue and visceral imaging of the chest, abdomen, pelvis, and extremities
 - Brain and spine imaging when not obscured by dense bony structures
 - Vascular imaging when not obscured by dense bony structures
 - Procedural guidance when not obscured by dense bony structures
 - Initial evaluation of ill-defined soft tissue masses or fullness and differentiating adenopathy from mass or cyst. Prior to advanced imaging, ultrasound can be very beneficial in selecting the proper modality, body area, image sequences, and contrast level that will provide the most definitive information for the individual.
- More specific guidance for ultrasound usage, including exceptions to this general guidance, can be found throughout the condition-specific guidelines.

Computed Tomography (CT):

- The AMA CPT® manual does not describe nor assign any minimum or maximum number of sequences for any CT study. CT imaging protocols are often influenced by the individual clinical situation of the individual and additional sequences are not uncommon. There are numerous CT protocols that may be performed to evaluate specific clinical questions, and this technology is constantly undergoing development.
- CT utilizes ionizing radiation to create cross-sectional and volumetric images of the body.
 - Advantages over ultrasound include a much larger field of view, and faster completion time in general. Disadvantages compared to ultrasound include lack of portability and exposure to ionizing radiation.
 - Advantages over MRI include faster imaging, and a more spacious scanner area limiting claustrophobia. Disadvantages compared to MRI include decreased soft tissue definition, especially with non-contrast imaging, and exposure to ionizing radiation.
- CT can be performed without, with, or without and with intravenous (IV) contrast depending on the clinical indication and body area.
 - In general, non-contrast imaging is appropriate for evaluating structures with significant tissue density differences such as lung parenchyma and bony structures, or when there is a contraindication to contrast.

- In general, CT with contrast is the most common level of contrast and can be used when there is need for improved vascular or soft tissue resolution, including better characterization of known or suspected malignancy, as well as, infectious and inflammatory conditions.
- CT without and with contrast has a limited role as the risks of doubling the ionizing radiation exposure rarely outweigh the benefits of multiphasic imaging, though there are some exceptions which include but are not limited to:
 - Characterization of a mass
 - Characterization of arterial and venous anatomy
 - CT with contrast may be used to better characterize findings on a very recent (within two weeks) inconclusive non-contrast CT where the guidelines would support CT without and with contrast.
- More specific guidance for CT contrast usage, including exceptions to this general guidance can be found throughout the condition-specific guidelines.
- Shellfish allergy:
 - It is commonly assumed that an allergy to shellfish indicates iodine allergy, and that this implies an allergy to iodinated contrast media used with CT. However, this is NOT true. Shellfish allergy is due to tropomyosins. Iodine plays no role in these allergic reactions. Allergies to shellfish do not increase the risk of reaction to iodinated contrast media any more than that of other allergens.¹
- Enteric contrast (oral or rectal) is sometimes used in abdominal imaging. There is no specific CPT[®] code which refers to enteric contrast.
- The appropriate contrast level and anatomic region in CT imaging is specific to the clinical indication, as listed in the condition-specific guideline sections.
- CT should not be used to replace MRI in an attempt to avoid sedation unless it is listed as a recommended study the appropriate condition-specific guideline.
- There are significant potential adverse effects associated with the use of iodinated contrast media. These include hypersensitivity reactions, thyroid dysfunction, and contrast-induced nephropathy (CIN). Individuals with impaired renal function are at increased risk for CIN.²
- Both contrast CT and MRI may be considered to have the same risk profile with renal failure (GFR <30 mL/min).
- The use of CT contrast should proceed with caution in pregnant and breastfeeding individuals. There is a theoretical risk of contrast toxicity to the fetal and infant thyroid. The procedure can be performed if the specific need for that contrast-enhanced procedure outweighs risk to the fetus. Breastfeeding individuals may reduce this risk by choosing to pump and discard breast milk for 12-24 hours after the contrast injection.
- CT without contrast may be appropriate if clinical criteria for CT with contrast are met AND the individual has:
 - Elevated blood urea nitrogen (BUN) and/or creatinine

- Renal insufficiency
- Allergies to iodinated contrast
- Thyroid disease which could be treated with I-131
- Diabetes
- Very elderly
- Urgent or emergent settings due to availability
- Trauma
- CT is superior to other imaging modalities in certain conditions, including but not limited to the following:
 - Screening following trauma
 - Imaging pulmonary disease
 - Imaging abdominal and pelvic viscera
 - Imaging of complex fractures
 - Evaluation of inconclusive findings on Ultrasound or MRI, or if there is a contraindication to MRI
- More specific guidance for CT usage, including exceptions to this general guidance can be found throughout the condition specific guidelines.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI):

- The AMA CPT® manual does not describe nor assign any minimum or maximum number of sequences for any MRI study. MRI protocols are often influenced by the individual clinical situation of the individual and additional sequences are not uncommon. There are numerous MRI sequences that may be performed to evaluate specific clinical questions, and this technology is constantly undergoing development.
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) utilizes the interaction between the intrinsic radiofrequency of certain Molecules in the body (hydrogen in most cases) and a strong external magnetic field.
 - MRI is often superior for advanced imaging of soft tissues and can also define physiological processes in some instances [e.g. edema, loss of circulation (AVN), and increased vascularity (tumors)].
 - MRI does not use ionizing radiation, and even non-contrast images have much higher soft tissue definition than CT or Ultrasound
 - MRI typically takes much longer than either CT or Ultrasound, and for some individuals may require sedation. It is also much more sensitive to individual motion that can degrade image quality than either CT or Ultrasound.
- MRI Breast and MRI Chest are not interchangeable, as they focus detailed sequences on different adjacent body parts.
- MRI may be utilized either as the primary advanced imaging modality, or when further definition is needed based on CT or ultrasound imaging.

- Most orthopedic and dental implants are not magnetic. These include hip and knee replacements; plates, screws, and rods used to treat fractures; and cavity fillings. Yet, all of these metal implants can distort the MRI image if near the part of the body being scanned.
 - Other implants, however, may have contraindications to MRI. These include:
 - Pacemakers
 - ICD or heart valves
 - Metal implants in the brain
 - Metal implants in the eyes or ears
 - Infusion catheters and bullets or shrapnel.
 - CT can therefore be an alternative study to MRI in these scenarios.
- The contrast level and anatomic region in MRI imaging is specific to the clinical indication, as listed in the specific guideline sections.
- MRI is commonly performed without, without and with contrast.
 - Non-contrast imaging offers excellent tissue definition
 - Imaging without and with contrast is commonly used when needed to better characterize tissue perfusion and vascularization.
 - Most contrast is gadolinium based and causes T2 brightening of the vascular and extracellular spaces.
 - Some specialized gadolinium and non-gadolinium contrast agents are available, and most commonly used for characterizing liver lesions.
 - MRI with contrast only is rarely appropriate and is usually used to better characterize findings on a recent inconclusive non-contrast MRI, commonly called a completion study.
 - MRI contrast is contraindicated in pregnant individuals
 - More specific guidance for MRI contrast usage, including exceptions to this general guidance can be found throughout the condition specific guidelines.
- MRI may be preferred in individuals with renal failure, and in individuals allergic to intravenous CT contrast.
 - Both contrast CT and MRI may be considered to have the same risk profile with renal failure (GFR <30 mL/min).²
 - Gadolinium can cause Nephrogenic Systemic Fibrosis (NSF). The greater the exposure to gadolinium in individuals with a low GFR (especially if on dialysis), the greater the chance of individuals developing NSF.
 - Multiple studies have demonstrated potential for gadolinium deposition following the use of gadolinium-based contrast agents (GBCAs) for MRI studies.^{3,4,5,6,7} The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has noted that there is currently no evidence to suggest that gadolinium retention in the brain is harmful and restricting gadolinium-based contrast agents (GBCAs) use is not warranted at

this time. It has been recommended that GBCA use should be limited to circumstances in which additional information provided by the contrast agent is necessary and the necessity of repetitive MRIs with GBCAs should be assessed.⁸

- A CT may be approved in place of an MRI when clinical criteria are met for MRI AND there is a contraindication to having an MRI (pacemaker, ICD, insulin pump, neurostimulator, etc.)
 - When replacing MRI with CT, contrast level matching should occur as follows:
 - MRI without contrast → CT without contrast
 - MRI without and with contrast → CT with contrast or CT without and with contrast
- The following situations may impact the appropriateness for MRI and or MR contrast
 - Caution should be taken in the use of gadolinium in individuals with renal failure
 - The use of gadolinium contrast agents is contraindicated during pregnancy unless the specific need for that procedure outweighs risk to the fetus.
 - MRI can be performed for non-ferromagnetic body metals (i.e. titanium), although some imaging facilities will consider it contraindicated if recent surgery, regardless of the metal type
- MRI should not be used as a replacement for CT for the sole reason of avoidance of ionizing radiation when MRI is not supported in the condition-based guidelines, since it does not solve the problem of overutilization.
- MRI is superior to other imaging modalities in certain conditions, including but not limited to the following:
 - Imaging the brain and spinal cord
 - Characterizing visceral and musculoskeletal soft tissue masses
 - Evaluating musculoskeletal soft tissues including ligaments and tendons
 - Evaluating inconclusive findings on ultrasound or CT
 - Individuals who are pregnant or have high radiation sensitivity
 - Suspicion, diagnosis of or surveillance of infections
- More specific guidance for MRI usage, including exceptions to this general guidance can be found throughout the condition-specific guidelines.

Positron Emission Tomography (PET):

- PET is a nuclear medicine study that uses a positron emitting radiotracer to create cross-sectional and volumetric images based on tissue metabolism.
- Conventional imaging (frequently CT, sometimes MRI or bone scan) of the affected area(s) drives much of initial and restaging and surveillance imaging for malignancy and other chronic conditions. PET is not indicated for surveillance imaging unless specifically stated in the condition-specific guideline sections.

- PET/MRI is generally not supported, See **PET-MRI (Preface-5.3)**
- PET is rarely performed as a single modality, but is typically performed as a combined PET/CT.
 - The unbundling of PET/CT into separate PET and diagnostic CT CPT® codes is not supported, because PET/CT is done as a single study.
- PET/CT lacks the tissue definition of CT or MRI, but is fairly specific for metabolic activity based on the radiotracer used
 - Fluorodeoxyglucose (fluorine-18-2-fluoro-2-deoxy-D-glucose [FDG]) is the most common PET radiotracer and images glucose metabolism
 - Some specialized radiotracers including Gallium-68 DOTATATE, C-11 Choline, F-18 Fluciclovine (AXUMIN®), 68Ga PSMA-11, and 18F Piflufolastat PSMA (Pylarify®) are supported in evaluation for some oncologic conditions, while the use of other radiotracers including but not limited to F-18 Sodium Fluoride is not supported.
- Indications for PET/CT may include
 - Oncologic Imaging for evaluation of tumor metabolic activity
 - Cardiac Imaging for evaluation of myocardial metabolic activity
 - Brain Imaging for evaluation of metabolic activity for procedural planning
- More specific guidance for PET usage, including exceptions to this general guidance can be found throughout the condition-specific guidelines.

Overutilization of Advanced Imaging:

- A number of recent reports describe overutilization in many areas of advanced imaging and other procedures, which may include:
 - High level testing without consideration of less invasive, lower cost options which may adequately address the clinical question at hand
 - Excessive radiation and costs with unnecessary testing
 - Defensive medical practice
 - CT without and with contrast (so called “double contrast studies) requests, which have few current indications.
 - MRI requested in place of CT to avoid radiation without considering the primary indication for imaging
 - Adult CT settings and protocols used for smaller people and children
 - Unnecessary imaging procedures when the same or similar studies have already been conducted.
- A review of the imaging or other relevant procedural histories of all individuals presenting for studies has been recognized as one of the more important processes that can be significantly improved. By recognizing that a duplicate or questionably indicated examination has been ordered for individuals, it may be possible to avoid

exposing them to unnecessary risks.^{9, 10} To avoid these unnecessary risks, the precautions below should be considered.

- The results of initial diagnostic tests or radiologic studies to narrow the differential diagnosis should be obtained prior to performing further tests or radiologic studies.
- The clinical history should include a potential indication such as a known or suspected abnormality involving the body part for which the imaging study is being requested. These potential indications are addressed in greater detail within the applicable guidelines.
- The results of the requested imaging procedures should be expected to have an impact on individual management or treatment decisions.
- Repeat imaging studies are not generally necessary unless there is evidence of disease progression, recurrence of disease, and/or the repeat imaging will affect an individual's clinical management.
- Preoperative imaging/pre-surgical planning imaging/pre-procedure imaging is not indicated if the surgery/procedure is not indicated. Once the procedure has been approved or if the procedure does not require prior authorization, the appropriate pre-procedural imaging may be approved.

References (Preface-3)

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Coding Issues (Preface-4)

Guideline

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3D Rendering (Preface-4.1)

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CPT® 76376 and CPT® 76377:

- Both codes require concurrent supervision of the image post-processing 3D manipulation of the volumetric data set and image rendering.
 - Concurrent supervision is defined as active physician participation in and monitoring of the reconstruction process including design of the anatomic region that is to be reconstructed; determination of the tissue types and actual structures to be displayed (e.g., bone, organs, and vessels); determination of the images or cine loops that are to be archived; and monitoring and adjustment of the 3D work product. The American College of Radiology (ACR) recommends that it is best to document the physician's supervision or participation in the 3D reconstruction of images.
- These two codes differ in the need for and use of an independent workstation for post-processing.
 - CPT® 76376 reports procedures not requiring image post-processing on an independent workstation.
 - CPT® 76377 reports procedures that require image post-processing on an independent workstation.
- These 3D rendering codes should not be used for 2D reformatting.
- Two-dimensional reconstruction (e.g. reformatting an axial scan into the coronal plane) is now included in all cross-sectional imaging base codes and is not separately reimbursable.
- The codes used to report 3D rendering for ultrasound and echocardiography are also used to report the 3D post processing work on CT, MRI, and other tomographic modalities.
- Providers may be required to obtain prior authorization on these 3D codes even if prior authorization is not required for the echocardiography and/or ultrasound procedure codes. It may appear that UnitedHealthcare pre-authorizes echocardiography and/or ultrasound when, in fact, it may only be the 3D code that needs the prior authorization.
- CPT® codes for 3D rendering should not be billed in conjunction with computer-aided detection (CAD), MRA, CTA, nuclear medicine SPECT studies, PET, PET/CT, Mammogram, MRI Breast, US Breast, CT Colonography (virtual colonoscopy), Cardiac MRI, Cardiac CT, or Coronary CTA studies.
- CPT® 76377 (3D rendering requiring image post-processing on an independent workstation) or CPT® 76376 (3D rendering not requiring image post-processing on an independent workstation) can be considered in the following clinical scenarios:
 - Bony conditions:

- Evaluation of congenital skull abnormalities in newborns, infants, and toddlers (usually for preoperative planning)
- Complex fractures (comminuted or displaced)/dislocations of any joint (For preoperative planning when conventional imaging is insufficient)
- Spine fractures, pelvic/acetabulum fractures, intra-articular fractures (For preoperative planning when conventional imaging is insufficient)
- Preoperative planning for other complex surgical cases
- Complex facial fractures
- Preoperative planning for other complex surgical cases
- Cerebral angiography
- Pelvis conditions:
 - Uterine intra-cavitary lesion when initial US is equivocal (See **Abnormal Uterine Bleeding (AUB) (PV-2.1)** and **Leiomyoma/Uterine Fibroids (PV-12.1)** in the Pelvis Imaging Guidelines)
 - Hydrosalpinx or peritoneal cysts when initial US is indeterminate (See **Complex Adnexal Masses (PV-5.3)** in the Pelvis Imaging Guidelines)
 - Lost IUD (inability to feel or see IUD string) with initial US (See **Intrauterine Device (PV-10.1)** in the Pelvis Imaging Guidelines)
 - Uterine anomalies with initial US (See **Uterine Anomalies (PV-14.1)** in the Pelvis Imaging Guidelines)
 - Infertility (See **Initial Infertility Evaluation, Female (PV-9.1)** in the Pelvis Imaging Guidelines)
- Abdomen conditions:
 - CT Urogram (See **Hematuria and Hydronephrosis (AB-39)** in the Abdomen Imaging Guidelines)
 - MRCP (See **MR Cholangiopancreatography (MRCP) (AB-27)** in the Abdomen Imaging Guidelines)

CT-, MR-, or Ultrasound-Guided Procedures (Preface-4.2)

PRF.CD.0004.2.UOH

v1.0.2023

- CT, MR, and Ultrasound guidance procedure codes contain all the imaging necessary to guide a needle or catheter. It is inappropriate to routinely bill a diagnostic procedure code in conjunction with a guidance procedure code.
- Imaging studies performed as part of a CT-, MR-, or Ultrasound-guided procedure should be reported using the CPT® codes in the following table.

TABLE: Imaging Guidance Procedure Codes

CPT®	Description
76942	Ultrasonic guidance for needle placement
77022	MR guidance for, and monitoring of parenchymal tissue ablation
77021	MR guidance for needle placement
77013	CT guidance for, and monitoring of parenchymal tissue ablation
77012	CT guidance for needle placement
77011	CT guidance for stereotactic localization
75989	Imaging guidance for percutaneous drainage with placement of catheter (all modalities)
19086	Biopsy, breast, with placement of breast localization device(s), when performed, and imaging of the biopsy specimen, when performed, percutaneous; each additional lesion, including MR guidance
19085	Biopsy, breast, with placement of breast localization device(s), when performed, and imaging of the biopsy specimen, when performed, percutaneous; first lesion, including MR guidance

CPT® 19085 and CPT® 19086:

- The proper way to bill an MRI guided breast biopsy is CPT® 19085 (Biopsy, breast, with placement of breast localization device(s), when performed, and imaging of the biopsy specimen, when performed, percutaneous; first lesion, including MR guidance). Additional lesions should be billed using CPT® 19086.
 - **CPT® 77021** (MR guidance for needle placement) is not an appropriate code for a breast biopsy.

CPT® 75989:

- This code is used to report imaging guidance for a percutaneous drainage procedure in which a catheter is left in place.

- This code can be used to report whether the drainage catheter is placed under fluoroscopy, ultrasound, CT, or MR guidance modality.

CPT® 77011:

- A stereotactic CT localization scan is frequently obtained prior to sinus surgery. The dataset is then loaded into the navigational workstation in the operating room for use during the surgical procedure. The information provides exact positioning of surgical instruments with regard to the individual's 3D CT images.³
- In most cases, the preoperative CT is a technical-only service that does not require interpretation by a radiologist.
 - The imaging facility should report CPT® 77011 when performing a scan not requiring interpretation by a radiologist.
 - If a diagnostic scan is performed and interpreted by a radiologist, the appropriate diagnostic CT code (e.g., CPT® 70486) should be used.
 - It is not appropriate to report both CPT® 70486 and CPT® 77011 for the same CT stereotactic localization imaging session.
 - 3D Rendering (CPT® 76376 or CPT® 76377) should not be reported in conjunction with CPT® 77011 (or CPT® 70486 if used). The procedure inherently generates a 3D dataset.

CPT® 77012 (CT) and CPT® 77021 (MR):

- These codes are used to report imaging guidance for needle placement during biopsy, aspiration, and other percutaneous procedures.
- They represent the radiological supervision and interpretation of the procedure and are often billed in conjunction with surgical procedure codes.
 - For example, CPT® 77012 is reported when CT guidance is used to place the needle for a conventional arthrogram.
 - Only codes representing percutaneous surgical procedures should be billed with CPT® 77012 and CPT® 77021. It is inappropriate to use with surgical codes for open, excisional, or incisional procedures.
 - **CPT® 77021** (MR guidance for needle placement) is not an appropriate code for breast biopsy.
 - CPT® 19085 would be appropriate for the first breast biopsy site, and CPT® 19086 would be appropriate for additional concurrent biopsies.

CPT® 77013 (CT) and CPT® 77022 (MR):

- These codes include the initial guidance to direct a needle electrode to the tumor(s), monitoring for needle electrode repositioning within the lesion, and as necessary for multiple ablations to coagulate the lesion and confirmation of satisfactory coagulative necrosis of the lesion(s) and comparison to pre-ablation images.
 - **NOTE:** CPT® 77013 should only be used for non-bone ablation procedures.

- CPT® 20982 includes CT guidance for bone tumor ablations.
- Only codes representing percutaneous surgical procedures should be billed with CPT® 77013 and CPT® 77022. It is inappropriate to use with surgical codes for open, excisional, or incisional procedures.
- CPT® 77012 and CPT® 77021 (as well as guidance codes CPT® 76942 [US], and CPT® 77002 - CPT® 77003 [fluoroscopy]) describe radiologic guidance by different modalities.
 - Only one unit of any of these codes should be reported per individual encounter (date of service). The unit of service is considered to be the individual encounter, not the number of lesions, aspirations, biopsies, injections, or localizations.

Unlisted Procedures/Therapy Treatment Planning (Preface-4.3)

PRF.CD.0004.3.UOH

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CPT®	Description
78999	Unlisted procedure, diagnostic nuclear medicine
76498	Unlisted MR procedure (e.g., diagnostic or interventional)
76497	Unlisted CT procedure (e.g., diagnostic or interventional)

- These unlisted codes should be reported whenever a diagnostic or interventional CT or MR study is performed in which an appropriate anatomic site-specific code is not available.
 - A Category III code that describes the procedure performed must be reported rather than an unlisted code if one is available.
- CPT® 76497 or CPT® 76498 (Unlisted CT or MRI procedure) can be considered in the following clinical scenarios:
 - Studies done for navigation and planning for neurosurgical procedures (i.e. Stealth or Brain Lab Imaging)^{1,2}
 - Custom joint Arthroplasty planning (not as Alternative Recommendation) (See **Osteoarthritis (MS-12.1)** in the Musculoskeletal Imaging Guidelines)
 - Any procedure/surgical planning if thinner cuts or different positional acquisition (than those on the completed diagnostic study) are needed. These could include navigational bronchoscopy. See **Navigational Bronchoscopy (CH-1.7)** in the Chest Imaging Guidelines

Therapy Treatment Planning

- Radiation Therapy Treatment Planning: See **Unlisted Procedure Codes in Oncology (ONC-1.5)** In the Oncology Imaging Guidelines

CPT® 76380 Limited or Follow-up CT (Preface-4.5)

PRF.CD.0004.5.UOH

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- CPT® 76380 describes a limited or follow-up CT scan. The code is used to report any CT scan, for any given area of the body, in which the work of a full diagnostic code is not performed.
- Common examples include (but are not limited to):
 - Limited sinus CT imaging protocol
 - Limited or follow-up slices through a known pulmonary nodule
 - Limited slices to assess a non-healing fracture (such as the clavicle)
- Limited CT (CPT® 76380) is not indicated for treatment planning purposes. Please See **Unlisted Procedure Codes in Oncology (ONC-1.5)** in the Oncology Imaging Guidelines.
- It is inappropriate to report CPT® 76380, in conjunction with other diagnostic CT codes, to cover 'extra slices' in certain imaging protocols.
 - There is no specific number of sequences or slices defined in any CT CPT® code definition.
 - The AMA, in *CPT® 2019*, does not describe nor assign any minimum or maximum number of sequences or slices for any CT study.
 - A few additional slices or sequences are not uncommon.
 - CT imaging protocols are often influenced by the individual clinical situation of the individual. Sometimes the protocols require more time and sometimes less.

SPECT/CT Imaging (Preface-4.6)

PRF.CD.0004.6.UOH

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- SPECT/CT involves SPECT (Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography) nuclear medicine imaging and CT for optimizing location, accuracy, and attenuation correction and combines functional and anatomic information.
 - Common studies using this modality include ¹²³I- or ¹³¹I- Metaiodobenzylguanidine (MIBG) and octreotide scintigraphy for neuroendocrine tumors.
- Hybrid Nuclear/CT scan can be CPT® 78830 - single area and single day, CPT® 78831 - 2 or more days, or CPT® 78832 - 2 areas with one day and 2-day study.
- A procedure code for SPECT/CT parathyroid nuclear imaging, (CPT® 78072), became effective January 1, 2013.

CPT® 76140 Interpretation of an Outside Study (Preface-4.7)

PRF.CD.0004.7.UOH

v1.0.2023

- It is inappropriate to use diagnostic imaging codes for interpretation of a previously performed exam that was completed at another facility.
 - If the outside exam is being used for comparison with a current exam, the diagnostic code for the current examination includes comparison to the prior study⁴
 - CPT® 76140 is the appropriate code to use for an exam which was completed elsewhere, and a secondary interpretation of the images is requested.⁵

Quantitative MR Analysis of Tissue Composition (Preface-4.8)

PRF.CD.0004.8.UOH

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- Category III CPT® codes for quantitative analysis of multiparametric MR (mp-MRI) data with and without an associated diagnostic MRI have been established. Quantitative mp-MRI uses software to analyze tissue physiology of visceral organs and other anatomic structures non-invasively. At present, these procedures are primarily being used in clinical trials and there is no widely recommended indications in clinical practice. As such, these procedures are considered to be investigational and experimental for coverage purposes.
 - CPT® 0648T (without diagnostic MRI) and CPT® 0649T (with diagnostic MRI) refer to data analysis with and without associate imaging of a single organ, with its most common use being LiverMultiScan (LMS)
 - See **Fatty Liver (AB-29.2)** in the Abdomen Imaging Guidelines
 - CPT® 0697T (without diagnostic MRI) and CPT® 0698T (with diagnostic MRI) refer to data analysis with and without associate imaging of a multiple organs, with its most common use being CoverScan.

HCPCS Codes (Preface-4.9)

PRF.CD.0004.9.UOH

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- Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) codes are utilized by some hospitals in favor of the typical Level 3 CPT® Codes. These codes are typically 4 digits preceded by a C, or S⁶
 - Many of these codes have similar code descriptions to level 3 CPT® codes (i.e. C8931 – MRA with dye, Spinal Canal, and 72159-MRA Spinal canal)
 - If cases are submitted with HCPCS codes with similar code descriptions to the typical level 3 CPT® codes, those procedures should be managed in the same manner as the typical CPT® codes
 - HCPCS code management is discussed further in the applicable guideline sections
- Requests for many Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) codes, including nonspecific codes such as S8042 [Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), low-field], should be redirected to a more appropriate and specific CPT® code. Exceptions are noted in the applicable guideline sections.

References (Preface-4)

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1. Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging Coding Corner <http://www.snmmi.org/ClinicalPractice/CodingCornerPT.aspx?ItemNumber=1786>
2. Intraoperative MR. Brainlab. <https://www.brainlab.com/surgery-products/overview-neurosurgery-products/intraoperative-mr/>
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5. Chung CY, Alson MD, Duszak R, Degnan AJ. From imaging to reimbursement: what the pediatric radiologist needs to know about health care payers, documentation, coding and billing. *Pediatric Radiology*. 2018;48(7):904-914. doi:10.1007/s00247-018-4104-1
6. HCPCS - General Information from CMS.gov at <https://www.cms.gov/medicare/coding/medhcpcsgeninfo>

Whole Body Imaging (Preface-5)

Guideline

Whole Body CT Imaging (Preface-5.1)

Whole Body MR Imaging (Preface-5.2)

PET-MRI (Preface-5.3)

References (Preface-5)

Whole Body CT Imaging (Preface-5.1)

PRF.WB.0005.1.UOH

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- Whole-body CT or LifeScan (CT Brain, Chest, Abdomen, and Pelvis) for screening of asymptomatic individuals is not indicated. The performance of whole-body screening CT examinations in healthy individuals does not meet any of the current validity criteria for screening studies and there is no clear documentation of benefit versus radiation risk.
- Whole-body low dose CT is supported for oncologic staging in Multiple Myeloma (See **Multiple Myeloma and Plasmacytomas (ONC-25)** in the Oncology Imaging Guidelines)

Whole Body MR Imaging (Preface-5.2)

PRF.WB.0005.2.UOH

v1.0.2023

- Whole-body MRI (WBMRI) is, with the exception of select cancer predisposition syndromes and autoimmune conditions discussed below, generally not supported at this time due to lack of standardization in imaging technique and lack of evidence that WBMRI improves individual outcome for any individual disease state.
 - While WBMRI has the benefit of whole-body imaging and lack of radiation exposure, substantial variation still exists in the number of images, type of sequences (STIR vs. diffusion weighting, for example), and contrast agent(s) used.
- Coding considerations:
 - There are no established CPT® or HCPCS codes for reporting WBMRI.
 - WBMRI is at present only reportable using CPT® 76498. All other methods of reporting whole-body MRI are inappropriate, including:
 - Separate diagnostic MRI codes for multiple individual body parts
 - MRI Bone Marrow Supply (CPT® 77084)
- Disease-specific considerations:
 - Cancer screening:
 - Interval WBMRI is recommended for cancer screening in individuals with select cancer predisposition syndromes. Otherwise, WBMRI has not been shown to improve outcomes for cancer screening. See **Li-Fraumeni Syndrome (LFS) (PEDONC-2.2)**, **Hereditary Paraganglioma-Pheochromocytoma (HPP) Syndromes (PEDONC-2.13)**, **Constitutional Mismatch Repair Deficiency (CMMRD or Turcot Syndrome) (PEDONC-2.15)** in the Pediatric Oncology Imaging Guidelines for additional information
 - Cancer staging and restaging
 - While the feasibility of WBMRI has been established, data remain conflicting on whether WBMRI is of equivalent diagnostic accuracy compared with standard imaging modalities such as CT, scintigraphy, and PET imaging.
 - Evidence has not been published establishing WBMRI as a standard evaluation for any type of cancer.
 - Autoimmune disease
 - WBMRI can be approved in some situations for individuals with chronic recurrent multifocal osteomyelitis. See **Chronic Recurrent Multifocal Osteomyelitis (PEDMS-10.2)** in the Pediatric Musculoskeletal Imaging Guidelines for additional information.

PET-MRI (Preface-5.3)

PRF.WB.0005.3.UOH

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- PET-MRI is generally not supported for a vast majority of oncologic and neurologic conditions due to lack of standardization in imaging technique and interpretation. However, it may be appropriate in select circumstances when the following criteria are met:
 - The individual meets guideline criteria for PET-CT **AND** PET-CT is not available at the treating institution **AND**
 - The provider requests PET-MRI in lieu of PET-CT
- When the above criteria are met, PET-MRI may be reported using the code combination of PET Whole-Body (CPT® 78813) and MRI Unlisted (CPT® 76498). All other methods of reporting PET-MRI are inappropriate.
 - When clinically appropriate, diagnostic MRI codes may be indicated at the same time as the PET-MRI code combination.
- See **PET Imaging in Pediatric Oncology (PEDONC-1.4)** in the Pediatric Oncology Imaging Guidelines, **PET Brain Imaging (PEDHD-2.3)**, and **Special Imaging Studies in Evaluation for Epilepsy Surgery (PEDHD-6.3)** in the Pediatric Head Imaging Guidelines for more information

References (Preface-5)

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7. National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) Guidelines Version 2.2022. – March 19, 2022, Genetic/Familial High Risk Assessment: Breast and Ovarian, available at: https://www.nccn.org/professionals/physician_gls/pdf/genetics_bop.pdf Referenced with permission from the NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology (NCCN Guidelines™) for Genetic/Familial High-Risk Assessment: Breast, Ovarian, and Pancreatic V2.2022. – March 19, 2022 ©. 2022 National Comprehensive Cancer Network, Inc. All rights reserved. The NCCN Guidelines™ and illustrations herein may not be reproduced in any form for any purpose without the express written permission of the NCCN. To view the most recent and complete version of the NCCN Guidelines™, go online to NCCN.org

References (Preface-6)

Guideline

References (Preface-6.1)

References (Preface-6.1)

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- Complete reference citations for the journal articles are embedded within the body of the guidelines and/or may be found on the Reference pages at the end of some guideline sections.
- The website addresses for certain references are included in the body of the guidelines but are not hyperlinked to the actual website.
- The website address for the American College of Radiology (ACR) Appropriateness Criteria® is <http://www.acr.org>.

Copyright Information (Preface-7)

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Copyright Information (Preface-7.1)

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Neck Imaging Guidelines

Abbreviations for Neck Imaging Guidelines

General (Neck-1)

Cerebrovascular and Carotid Disease (Neck-2)

Dysphagia and Esophageal Disorders (Neck-3)

Neck Mass/Swelling/Adenopathy (Neck-5)

Recurrent Laryngeal Nerve Palsy (Neck-7)

Thyroid and Parathyroid (Neck-8)

Trachea and Bronchus (Neck-9)

Neck Pain (Neck-10)

Salivary Gland Disorders (Neck-11)

Sore Throat, Odynophagia, and Hoarseness (Neck-12)

Abbreviations for Neck Imaging Guidelines

ALS	amyotrophic lateral sclerosis
CT	computed tomography
ENT	Ear, Nose, Throat
FNA	fine needle aspiration
GERD	gastroesophageal reflux disease
GI	gastrointestinal
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
MRI	magnetic resonance imaging

General (Neck-1)

General Guidelines (Neck-1.0)

- A pertinent clinical evaluation since the onset or change in symptoms including a detailed history, physical examination, appropriate laboratory studies, and basic imaging such as plain radiography or ultrasound should be performed prior to considering advanced imaging (CT, MR, Nuclear Medicine), unless the individual is undergoing guideline-supported scheduled imaging evaluation. A meaningful technological contact (telehealth visit, telephone call, electronic mail or messaging) since the onset or change in symptoms can serve as a pertinent clinical evaluation
- Advanced imaging of the neck covers the following areas:
 - ◆ Skull base (thus a separate CPT® code for head imaging in order to visualize the skull base is not necessary).
 - ◆ Nasopharynx
 - ◆ Upper oral cavity to the head of the clavicle
 - ◆ Parotid glands and the supraclavicular region
- Ultrasound of neck soft tissues including thyroid, parathyroid, parotid and other salivary glands, lymph nodes, cysts, etc. is coded as CPT® 76536. This can be helpful in more ill-defined masses or fullness and differentiating adenopathy from mass or cyst, to define further advanced imaging.
- CT Neck
 - ◆ CT Neck is usually obtained with contrast only (CPT® 70491).
 - Little significant information is added by performing a CT Neck without and with contrast (CPT® 70492), and there is the risk of added radiation exposure, especially to the thyroid.
 - CT Neck without contrast (CPT® 70490) can be difficult to interpret due to difficulty identifying the blood vessels
 - Exception: Contrast is not generally used when evaluating the trachea with CT. Evaluate salivary duct stones in the appropriate clinical circumstance where intravenous contrast may obscure high attenuation stones
 - Contrast enhanced CT is helpful in the assessment of cervical adenopathy and preoperative planning in the setting of thyroid carcinomas
 - Contrast is recommended as an adjunct to US for individuals with clinical suspicion for advanced disease, including invasive primary tumor, or clinically apparent multiple or bulky lymph node involvement

- Contrast may cause intense and prolonged enhancement of the thyroid gland which interferes with radioactive iodine nuclear medicine studies.
 - Use of IV contrast is an important adjunct because it helps to delineate the anatomic relationship between the primary tumor and metastatic disease. Iodine is generally cleared within four to eight weeks in most individuals, so concern about iodine burden from IV contrast causing a clinically significant delay in subsequent whole-body scans (WBSs) or radioactive iodine (RAI) treatment after the imaging followed by surgery is generally unfounded. The benefit gained from improved anatomic imaging generally outweighs any potential risk of a several week delay in RAI imaging or therapy. Where there is concern, a urinary iodine to creatinine ratio can be measured.
- MRI Neck
 - ◆ MRI Neck is used less frequently than CT Neck.
 - ◆ MRI Neck without and with contrast (CPT® 70543) is appropriate if CT suggests the need for further imaging or if ultrasound or CT suggests any of the following:
 - Neurogenic tumor (schwannoma, neurofibroma, glomus tumor, etc.)
 - Vascular malformations
 - Deep neck masses
 - Angiofibromas
 - Concern for malignancy (See **Squamous Cell Carcinomas of the Head and Neck (ONC-3)**, **Salivary Gland Cancers (ONC-4)**, or **Thyroid Cancer (ONC-6)** as appropriate)
 - ◆ MRI Neck without and with contrast (CPT® 70543) is also directly supported if the head and neck specialist, or the provider in consultation with the head and neck specialist, has reasonable clinical concern:
 - For a skull base or nasopharyngeal neoplasm, or potential perineural invasion/cranial nerve involvement²
 - That extensive dental amalgam may obscure the anatomy on CT in individuals with oral cavity neoplasm

Reference

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Cerebrovascular and Carotid Disease (Neck-2)

Cerebrovascular and Carotid Disease (Neck-2.1)

- See these related topics in the Head Imaging Guidelines:
 - ◆ General Guidelines – CT and MR Angiography (CTA and MRA) (HD-1.5)
 - ◆ Aneurysm and AVM (HD-12)
 - ◆ Stroke/TIA (HD-21.1)
 - ◆ Cerebral Vasculitis (HD-22.1)
 - ◆ Dizziness, Vertigo and Syncope (HD-23)
 - ◆ Hearing Loss and Tinnitus (HD-27)
 - ◆ Eye Disorders and Visual Loss (HD-32)
- See **PVD-3: Cerebrovascular and Carotid Disease (PVD-3)** in Peripheral Vascular Disease Imaging Guidelines.
- See **Eagle Syndrome (Neck-10.3)**

Dysphagia and Esophageal Disorders (Neck-3)

Dysphagia and Esophageal Disorders (Neck-3.1)

- Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)^{5,14}
 - ◆ Advanced imaging is generally not indicated for the evaluation of GERD, the diagnosis of which is usually made on the basis of clinical history, in conjunction with endoscopy, pH monitoring, Upper GI Barium Studies, and occasionally manometry. Exceptions would include the following:
 - Non-cardiac chest pain suspected of being GERD should be evaluated first to exclude cardiac and other etiologies. See **Non-Cardiac Chest Pain-Imaging (CH-4.1)** in the Chest Imaging Guidelines.
 - Gastric emptying study (CPT[®] 78264) for individuals with refractory GERD symptoms, and gastroparesis is being considered.
- Suspected foreign body impaction and ingested foreign bodies:¹⁻³
 - ◆ Plain x-rays initial imaging.
 - ◆ If imaging is negative, or there is suspicion of a radiolucent foreign body (such as fish or chicken bones, wood, plastic, thin metal objects, aluminum can pop-ups, etc.):
 - CT Neck and/or Chest with or without contrast
 - 3-D reconstruction (CPT[®] 76377 or CPT[®] 76376) can be approved in this setting
 - ◆ The use of oral contrast is discouraged (to avoid the aspiration of contrast material) for acute dysphagia or foreign body impaction, as the contrast may not pass, may be aspirated, and can interfere with subsequent endoscopic intervention.
- Oropharyngeal or esophageal dysphagia^{4,6,10,11}
 - ◆ Oropharyngeal dysphagia (difficulty in transferring food from the mouth to the pharynx)
 - Suspected neurologic causes: See appropriate sections in **Head Imaging Guidelines**
 - Video fluoroscopic swallowing study – (Dynamic radiographic evaluation of swallowing during speech pathologist-guided oral intake of various consistencies)
 - Flexible fiberoptic laryngoscopy and/or FEES (Fiberoptic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing) – (Dynamic evaluation of swallowing via direct visualization using transnasal laryngoscopy during speech pathologist-guided oral intake of various consistencies)
 - CT Neck with contrast (CPT[®] 70491) is indicated for any anatomic abnormalities suggested on laryngoscopy exam or FEES
 - ◆ Esophageal dysphagia (difficulty in transferring food down the esophagus in the retrosternal region, e.g. food sticking in the neck or chest)
 - Initial barium esophagram or upper gastrointestinal endoscopy
 - Esophageal manometry if indicated

- Structural lesions identified on either esophagram or laryngoscopy/upper GI endoscopy requiring further evaluation (e.g. tumors, extrinsic compression):
 - CT Neck (CPT® 70491), CT Chest (CPT® 71260) and/or CT Abdomen (CPT® 74160) depending on the level of the lesion.
- Suspected perforation, abscess, or fistula
 - ◆ CT Neck, Chest, and/or Abdomen, preferably with contrast, as requested, depending on location
- Evaluation of structural abnormalities demonstrated on either esophagram or laryngoscopy/upper GI endoscopy (e.g., external compression, tumor, stricture, diverticulum, etc.)
 - ◆ CT Chest (CPT® 71260), CT Neck (CPT® 70491), and/or CT Abdomen (CPT® 74160) depending on location
- Hiatal hernia
 - ◆ See **Hiatal Hernia (AB-12.3)** in the Abdomen Imaging Guidelines
- Globus Sensation⁷⁻⁹
 - ◆ Globus sensation is a feeling of a lump or foreign body in the throat. In general, laryngoscopy, endoscopy, and physical examination will rule out malignant causes and advanced imaging is usually not needed for evaluation.
 - If red flag symptoms are present (dysphagia, weight loss, odynophagia, throat pain, hoarseness, hemoptysis, and/or unilateral presentation of symptoms)
 - Direct visualization with laryngoscopy and/or upper endoscopy should be performed prior to advanced imaging.
 - CT Neck with contrast (CPT® 70491) for ANY of the following:
 - Negative or equivocal findings on laryngoscopy and/or upper endoscopy
 - Known history of upper aerodigestive or esophageal malignancy
 - Known history of lymphoma
 - History of previous neck, esophageal, or gastric surgery
 - Palpable abnormality on physical examination
- Suspected Vascular Ring^{8,9,12,13,15,16,17} (See **Dysphagia (PEDNECK-5)**)
 - ◆ Advanced imaging can be performed if a vascular ring is suspected by, or in consultation with, the treating specialty, i.e., cardiothoracic surgery, cardiology, otolaryngology, and/or pulmonology. More commonly, this congenital pathology would be suspected in a much younger population, however, dysphagia lusoria is a relatively rare condition involving a vascular ring (usually an aberrant right subclavian artery). As children these individuals are asymptomatic but develop worsening dysphagia later in adulthood, presumably secondary to increasing calcification and blood pressure.
 - CTA Chest with contrast (CPT® 71275) or MRA Chest (CPT® 71555) are the preferred imaging studies in the evaluation of a suspected vascular ring
 - CT Chest with contrast (CPT® 71260), MRI Chest without contrast, or MRI Chest without and with contrast (CPT® 71550 or CPT® 71552), can be performed as alternative exams in the evaluation of suspected vascular ring.

- Post-operative dysphagia
 - ◆ Dysphagia following surgery on the oropharynx, soft tissues of the neck, cervical spine, esophagus, or stomach:
 - In the immediate post-operative period the concern is for fluid collections, anastomotic leaks, perforations, and abscess. In the delayed post-operative period (>1 month) the concern is recurrent disease or a late post-operative fluid collection.
 - CT Neck with contrast (CPT® 70491) and, if requested CT Chest with contrast (CPT® 71260) (IV contrast better defines the anatomic structures than a non-contrast study as soft-tissue and blood vessel enhancement are better delineated from post-operative fluid collections, such as hematomas and abscesses. Note: CT without and with contrast offers little additional benefit compared to a CT with contrast alone.¹⁰

Practice Notes

- A detailed history of the dysphagia symptoms is important to distinguish neurogenic, pharyngeal, and esophageal disorders.
- Dysphagia (difficulty swallowing) can be caused by a wide range of benign and malignant causes that affects the body's ability to move food or liquid from the mouth to the pharynx and into the esophagus.
- A short duration (weeks to months) of rapidly progressive esophageal dysphagia with associated weight loss is highly suggestive of esophageal cancer.
- Advanced imaging for individuals presenting with isolated globus rarely impacts clinical management. In a study of 148 neck CTs and 104 barium esophagrams done for the evaluation of globus sensation, there were no malignancies detected.

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Neck Mass/Swelling/Adenopathy (Neck-5)

Neck Mass/Swelling/Adenopathy (Neck-5.1)

- Cervical lymphadenitis is common and follows most viral or bacterial infections of the ears, nose and throat. Painful acute lymphadenopathy should be treated with a trial of conservative therapy for 2-weeks, including antibiotics if appropriate. If there is improvement with conservative treatment, advanced imaging is not indicated. If the adenopathy persists, it may be imaged as per below.^{1,2,4}
- Ultrasound (CPT® 76536) can be considered for ANY of the following:^{1,2,4}
 - ◆ Anterior neck masses²
 - ◆ Cervical adenopathy/lymphadenitis or an inflammatory, infective, or reactive mass that has failed a 2-week trial of treatment or observation (including antibiotics if appropriate)^{1,2}
 - ◆ Any ill-defined mass, fullness or asymmetry²
 - ◆ High suspicion of malignancy^{2,4}
- CT Neck with contrast (CPT® 70491) can be considered if:^{2,4}
 - ◆ Neck mass with any ONE of the following:
 - Non-tender neck masses⁴
 - Size $\geq 1.5\text{cm}^4$
 - Firm texture or fixation of the mass⁴
 - Absence of acute, uncomplicated infectious etiology^{4,7}
 - Cervical adenopathy/lymphadenitis or an inflammatory, infective, or reactive mass that has failed a 2-week trial of treatment or observation (including antibiotics if appropriate)^{2,4}
 - Ear pain ipsilateral to the neck mass⁴
 - Associated onset of persistent hoarseness, tonsil asymmetry, oral or oropharyngeal ulceration, hemoptysis, weight loss, or ulceration of skin overlying the neck mass^{4,7}
 - History of malignancy that would be primary or metastatic to the neck⁴
 - Prior ultrasound results are suspicious or indeterminate for malignancy²
 - ◆ Carcinoma found in a lymph node or other neck mass²
 - ◆ Suspected peritonsillar, retropharyngeal or other cervical space abscess²
 - ◆ Suspected or known sarcoidosis⁵
 - ◆ Preoperative evaluation of any neck mass²
- MRI Neck without and with contrast (CPT® 70543) is supported if:²
 - ◆ CT suggests the need for further imaging²
 - ◆ Ultrasound or CT suggests neurogenic tumor (schwannoma, neurofibroma, glomus tumor, etc.), vascular malformations, deep neck masses, or angiofibroma.²
- MRI Neck without and with contrast (CPT® 70543) is also directly supported if the head and neck specialist, or the provider in consultation with the head and neck specialist, has reasonable clinical concern:

For a skull base or nasopharyngeal neoplasm, or potential perineural invasion/cranial nerve involvement⁷

- ◆ That extensive dental amalgam may obscure the anatomy on CT in individuals with oral cavity neoplasm.

Background and Supporting Information

- Painful acute lymphadenopathy associated with uncomplicated pharyngitis, URI or tonsillitis should undergo conservative therapy for two weeks including antibiotics, if appropriate. If there is improvement with conservative treatment, advanced imaging is not indicated if:^{3,4,5}
 - ◆ Inflammatory neck adenopathy is often associated with upper respiratory infection, pharyngitis, dental infection, HIV and toxoplasmosis. Occasionally it is associated with sarcoidosis and tuberculosis.
- Malignancy is a greater possibility in adults that are heavy drinkers and smokers, but HPV associated disease is on the rise and there can be a high suspicion for malignancy even without these traditional risk factors.
- ENT evaluation can be helpful in determining the need for advanced imaging.
- Although CT and MRI can have characteristic appearances for certain entities, biopsy and histological diagnosis are the only way to obtain a definitive diagnosis. The preferred initial method of biopsy is Ultrasound guided core needle biopsy of the mass.^{5,6}
- The most common causes of neoplastic cervical adenopathy are metastasis from head and neck tumors or lymphoma.

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Recurrent Laryngeal Nerve Palsy (Neck-7)

Recurrent Laryngeal Nerve Palsy (Neck-7.1)

- See Recurrent Laryngeal Nerve Palsy (HD-7.1) in the Head Imaging Guidelines

Thyroid and Parathyroid (Neck-8)

Thyroid Nodule (Neck-8.1)

Hyperthyroidism and Hypothyroidism (Neck-8.2)

Parathyroid Imaging (Neck-8.3)

Parathyroid Incidentaloma (Neck-8.4)

Thyroid Nodule (Neck-8.1)

- Serum thyrotropin (TSH) should be measured in the initial evaluation of thyroid nodule/mass/asymmetry/goiter but is not required for follow-up imaging.^{1,3,6,8}
- Nuclear scan (CPT® 78013 or CPT® 78014) is indicated if the serum TSH is subnormal and ANY of the following:
 - ◆ Single or multiple thyroid nodules^{1,3,6,8}
 - ◆ Suspicion of ectopic thyroid tissue³
 - ◆ Presence of thyroid nodule in the setting of Grave’s disease.^{3,8}
- Ultrasound (US) Neck (CPT® 76536) is indicated for evaluation of a palpable thyroid nodule/mass/asymmetry/goiter regardless of TSH level:^{3,5}
 - ◆ Incidentally found on CT, MRI, or PET (focal activity)^{2,3,6}
 - ◆ Nodules ≤1 cm with very low suspicion US pattern including spongiform pattern (>50% small cystic spaces) and pure cysts do not require repeat US.^{6,10}
- ACR Thyroid Imaging, Reporting, and Data Systems (TI-RADS), consisting of five levels, is utilized for recommendations in determining US follow-up vs FNA of thyroid nodule(s).¹⁰
 - ◆ TI-RADS 1 (Benign) and TI-RADS 2 (Not Suspicious): Follow-up US is not indicated
 - ◆ Additional sonograms are indicated for more suspicious thyroid nodules that do not meet size criteria for FNA, such as TI-RADS 3 (Mildly Suspicious), TI-RADS 4 (Moderately Suspicious and TI-RADS 5 (Highly Suspicious) as follows:

ACR TI-RADS Levels for Thyroid Nodule Follow-Up Ultrasound or FNA			
TI-RADS 3 Mildly Suspicious	≥1.5 to 2.4 cm - US at 1, 3, and 5 years ≥2.5 cm - FNA	No further imaging if stable and no increase at 5 years*	TI-Rads level increases but is still below FNA range: Re-image with US in 1 year.
TI-RADS 4 Moderately Suspicious	≥1.0 to 1.4 cm - US at 1, 2, 3, and 5 years ≥1.5 cm - FNA	No further imaging if stable and no increase at 5 years*	TI-Rads level increases but is still below FNA range: Re-image with US in 1 year.
TI-RADS 5 Highly Suspicious	≥0.5 to 0.9 cm – US annually for 5 years ≥1.0 cm - FNA	No further imaging if stable and no increase at 5 years*	

- *If nodule enlarges on follow-up US but remains below the FNA size threshold for their ACR TI-RADS level at 5 years, additional follow-up US imaging at the discretion of Thyroid Specialist, Endocrinologist, Neck/Thyroid Surgeon.
- ◆ If a TIRADS classification is not stated on a thyroid US report, clinical judgement should be used to determine appropriateness of follow-up imaging interval
- ◆ The American Thyroid Association guidelines from 2015 also use imaging characteristics and size for thyroid nodule risk stratification however size cutoffs are slightly more generous when compared to ACR-TIRADs. Sonographic imaging and/or biopsy requests in accordance with ATA criteria are appropriate³.
- ◆ See **Thyroid Cancer-Surveillance/Follow-up (ONC-6.4)** for thyroid nodules that are biopsy proven thyroid cancer but are being monitored on active surveillance
- Nuclear medicine thyroid scan (CPT[®] 78013 or CPT[®] 78014) is considered for ANY of the following (TSH is not required prior to imaging in the below settings):
 - ◆ Evaluate eligibility for radioiodine therapy³
 - ◆ Select nodules to biopsy in multinodular goiter even if TSH not low^{1,6}
 - ◆ Substernal goiter with compressive symptoms (e.g. dyspnea, stridor, cough, dysphonia, dysphagia)
 - ◆ Non-diagnostic or indeterminate FNA of thyroid nodule, (e.g. follicular lesion of undetermined significance) to see if hot (functioning) nodule that may be benign vs cold nodule.
- CT Neck with contrast (CPT[®] 70491) or CT Neck without contrast (CPT[®] 70490), or MRI Neck without and with contrast (CPT[®] 70543). CT is preferred since there is less motion artifact than with MRI. MRI and CT **are not** indicated for routine thyroid nodule evaluation and should only be considered for:
 - ◆ Evaluation of extent of known substernal goiter^{3,8}
 - ◆ Airway compression^{3,8}
 - ◆ Presence of pathologic lymph nodes in cervical regions not visualized on ultrasound³
 - ◆ Clinically suspected advanced disease confirmed by FNA, including invasive primary tumor^{3,6,8}
 - ◆ Preoperative planning for thyroid disease^{3,6}
 - ◆ Fine-Needle Aspiration (FNA) is indicated for suspicious and/or large thyroid nodules prior to CT or MRI imaging⁶
- A thyroid nodule detected for the first time during pregnancy should be managed in the same way as in non-pregnant individuals, except for avoiding the use of radioactive agents for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.³

Background and Supporting Information

- TI-RADS levels are determined based on the ultrasound appearance of the nodule. Grading criteria are available at <https://www.acr.org/-/media/ACR/Files/RADS/TI-RADS/TI-RADS-chart.pdf?la=en>.
- Ultrasonography (US) is preferred over CT and MRI^{1,2,3,6,8} for thyroid nodule assessment. Thyroid nodule management relies on ultrasound characteristics, TSH level and FNA biopsy, together with clinical findings.
- A thyroid nodule is distinct either on palpation or radiologically (incidentaloma). Nonpalpable nodules have the same risk of cancer as palpable. Nodules >1 cm are evaluated, while smaller nodules are generally evaluated if there are suspicious sonographic features, co-existing adenopathy or a history of radiation or cancer exists.
- Ultrasound is not used to screen: 1) the general population, 2) individuals with normal thyroid on palpation with a low risk of thyroid cancer, 3) individuals with hyperthyroidism, 4) individuals with hypothyroidism or 5) individuals with thyroiditis. Conversely, US can be considered in individuals who have no symptoms but are high-risk as a result of: history of head and neck irradiation, total body irradiation for bone marrow transplant, exposure to fallout from radiation during childhood or adolescence, as well as family history of thyroid cancer syndromes such as MEN2, medullary or papillary thyroid cancer, Cowden's disease, familial adenomatous polyposis, Carney complex, Werner syndrome/progeria.
- There is insufficient evidence supporting the use of PET to distinguish indeterminate thyroid nodules that are benign from those that are malignant.
- 18FDG-PET imaging is not routinely recommended for the evaluation of thyroid nodules with indeterminate cytology. Routine preoperative 18FDG-PET scanning is not recommended.
- Incidental focal FDG-PET uptake often corresponds to a clinically relevant thyroid nodule and ultrasound is recommended in individuals with a normal life expectancy.¹ Incidentally noted diffuse thyroid FDG-PET uptake most often corresponds to inflammatory uptake, however, ultrasound should be done to ensure that there is no evidence of clinically relevant nodularity.
- Elastography provides information about nodule stiffness that is complementary to gray scale ultrasound findings in nodules with indeterminate cytology or ultrasound findings. It should not be used as a substitute for gray scale ultrasound.
- Use of ultrasound contrast medium is not recommended for the diagnostic evaluation of thyroid nodules and its current use is restricted to definition of size and limits of necrotic zones after minimally invasive nodule ablation techniques.

Hyperthyroidism and Hypothyroidism (Neck-8.2)

- Hyperthyroidism suspected^{4,7}
 - ◆ Thyroid Uptake Study (CPT[®] 78012 or CPT[®] 78014) if ONE of the following:
 - TSH below normal range and elevated free T4 and/or free T3, OR
 - Subclinical hyperthyroidism with TSH <0.1 mU/L and normal free T4 and free T3, OR
 - Subclinical hyperthyroidism with TSH below the lower limit of normal but ≥0.1 and normal free T4 and free T3 in the setting of any of the following:
 - Age ≥65
 - Symptoms of hyperthyroidism
 - Presence of cardiac disease or osteoporosis
 - ◆ Ultrasound (US) Neck (CPT[®] 76536) if any of the following:
 - Palpable nodule on examination
 - Nuclear scanning is suggestive of thyroid nodular disease
 - Diagnostic uncertainty regarding the etiology of hyperthyroidism based on clinical presentation and initial biochemical evaluation.
 - To evaluate thyroid dimensions for planning RAI treatment
 - Nuclear scanning is contraindicated (ie. pregnancy, breastfeeding etc)
- Hyperthyroidism on therapy---For individuals with thyroid hormone levels (TSH, free T4 and free T3) within the normal, hypothyroid, or hyperthyroid range while receiving treatment with an anti-thyroid medication (methimazole or propylthiouracil/PTU)⁹
 - ◆ Nuclear Scan (CPT[®] 78013 or CPT[®] 78014) if ONE of the following:
 - To determine the cause of hyperthyroidism if there was no diagnostic scan prior to the start of medical therapy.
 - To characterize the uptake in a thyroid nodule(s) to properly triage the nodule for FNA if there was no diagnostic scan prior to the start of medical therapy.
 - ◆ Thyroid Uptake Study (CPT[®] 78012 or CPT[®] 78014) if:
 - Plan is for radioactive iodine therapy as definitive hyperthyroidism treatment.
- Hypothyroidism: There is no role for thyroid imaging in the workup of hypothyroidism in adults. Imaging for thyroid morphology does not help differentiate among causes of hypothyroidism, and all causes of hypothyroidism will have decreased radioiodine uptake

Parathyroid Imaging (Neck-8.3)

- Classic primary hyperparathyroidism
 - ◆ Parathyroid Planar Imaging (CPT[®] 78070), Parathyroid Planar Imaging with SPECT (CPT[®] 78071), or Parathyroid Planar Imaging with SPECT/CT (preferred study) (CPT[®] 78072)^{2,3,5} AND/OR Ultrasound (CPT[®] 76536)^{1,2} AND/OR 4D CT Neck without and with contrast (CPT[®] 70492) are approvable if BOTH of the following conditions are met^{1,2,3}
 - PTH and Calcium levels are elevated (See Background and Supporting Information).

- Intention of the study is preoperative localization.
 - All parathyroid nuclear scan codes (CPT® 78070, CPT® 78071, CPT® 78072) include thyroid subtraction when performed and no additional thyroid nuclear scan CPT codes are required unless otherwise indicated in **Thyroid Nodule (Neck-8.1)** or **Hyperthyroidism and Hypothyroidism (Neck 8.2)**.
 - Reporting or billing CPT® 78800 for the purpose of intraoperative parathyroid localization using a gamma probe is not supported if performed along with a parathyroid nuclear scan (CPT® 78070, CPT® 78071, CPT® 78072).
 - Ultrasound (CPT® 76536) can be ordered independently to evaluate the thyroid per criteria in **Thyroid Nodule (Neck-8.1)** or **Hyperthyroidism and Hypothyroidism (Neck 8.2)**.
 - 3D Imaging (CPT® 76376 or CPT® 76377) is indicated with a 4D CT Neck
- ◆ MRI Neck without and with contrast (CPT® 70543) for cases of re-operation, difficult localization or ionizing radiation contraindication^{1,6} ordered by an Endocrinologist, Parathyroid surgeon, or Radiologist or any provider in consultation with one of these specialists^{1,3}.
- ◆ CT Chest with contrast (CPT® 71260) in rare circumstances in the evaluation of ectopic mediastinal parathyroid adenomas¹⁴ ordered by an Endocrinologist, Parathyroid surgeon, or Radiologist or any provider in consultation with one of these specialists.
- ◆ Choline PET/CT (CPT® 78815 or CPT® 78816) is considered experimental and investigational for preoperative localization in cases of primary hyperparathyroidism.¹⁵⁻¹⁷
- ◆ Repeat imaging is supported both in individuals with prior non-localizing imaging who have not yet undergone parathyroid exploration OR in cases of hyperparathyroidism that recurs or persists after parathyroid surgery if reimaging is being ordered by a surgeon or any provider after consultation with a surgeon with expertise in parathyroidectomy¹.
- Primary hyperparathyroidism variants
 - ◆ Primary hyperparathyroidism with non-elevated serum calcium. (Serum Calcium level normal and PTH elevated).
 - Confirmatory study is elevated ionized calcium, elevated albumin corrected calcium or elevated historic calcium levels.^{1,4}
 - ◆ Hypercalcemia with inappropriately non-suppressed PTH (Calcium level elevated and PTH normal).
 - PTH level ≥ 25 pg/mL is consistent with primary hyperparathyroidism.
 - See **Background and Supporting Information** for more information.
 - ◆ Intention of parathyroid imaging should be for pre-operative localization.
 - ◆ Use the same guidance on imaging modalities as in described “classic” primary hyperparathyroidism.

Primary Hyperparathyroidism variants:

	Calcium	PTH	Confirms/strongly suggests primary hyperparathyroidism
Classic primary hyperparathyroidism	High	High	Yes
Primary hyperparathyroidism with non-elevated serum calcium	Normal	High	Elevated ionized albumin corrected or historic calcium levels*
Hypercalcemia with inappropriately non-suppressed PTH	High	Normal	PTH \geq 25 pg/ml

- Normocalcemic hyperparathyroidism
 - ◆ Serum calcium levels (including ionized calcium levels) are always normal and PTH levels are elevated.
 - ◆ Secondary causes of PTH elevation are excluded. See Background and Supporting Information for differential diagnosis of secondary hyperparathyroidism.
 - ◆ Calcium, PTH and clinical status should be monitored annually.
 - In the event of laboratory progression to hypercalcemia, refer to “classic” primary hyperparathyroidism for imaging guidance.
 - In the event of clinical progression (decline in bone mineral density or new fracture/renal stone/nephrocalcinosis), imaging for the intent of preoperative localization is as requested by or after consultation with a specialist or any provider in consultation with a specialist¹⁸.
- Secondary renal hyperparathyroidism
 - ◆ Serum calcium levels are low or normal (but may also be elevated in more advanced disease) and PTH levels are very elevated.
 - ◆ Imaging for the intent of preoperative localization as requested by or after consultation with a specialist if all of the following are met:
 - Individuals has stage 3a-stage 5 chronic kidney disease (GFR<60).
 - PTH level is >9x upper limit of normal reference range for the lab testing facility (~585 pg/mL) despite standard medical or pharmacologic therapy (calcimimetics, calcitriol and/or vitamin D analogs)¹⁹.
- Tertiary hyperparathyroidism
 - ◆ Serum calcium and PTH levels are elevated as a result of long standing secondary hyperparathyroidism in individuals on renal replacement therapy or after renal transplant.
 - ◆ Imaging for the intent of preoperative localization as requested by or in consultation with a specialist.

Hyperparathyroidism subtypes:

	Calcium	PTH	Clinical Hallmarks
Normocalcemic Hyperparathyroidism	Normal	High	Calcium never elevated
Secondary renal Hyperparathyroidism	Low/Normal/High	Very High	Stage 3a-5 CKD, PTH >9x ULN
Tertiary Hyperparathyroidism	High	High	ESRD/renal transplant

Background and Supporting Information

- Hypercalcemia in individuals with primary hyperparathyroidism may be determined by elevated serum calcium, elevated serum ionized calcium, elevated serum calcium level corrected for albumin, or historic calcium elevation. A comparison of serial measurements of calcium is helpful in determining the presence of true hypercalcemia as calcium levels may be variable over time.
- Parathyroidectomy candidacy should be determined by the provider, however national guidelines recognize the following criteria for Surgery^{1,4}
 - ◆ All individuals <50 years of age, regardless of whether objective features are present or absent.
 - ◆ All symptomatic individuals, including those with kidney stones, hypercalcemic crises, pathologic fractures or other associated symptoms.
 - ◆ Individuals with findings concerning for parathyroid cancer (very high calcium >13).
 - ◆ All asymptomatic individuals with the following:
 - Serum calcium >1.0 mg/dl (0.25 mmol/l) above the normal range
 - BMD by DEXA: T-score ≤2.5 at the lumbar spine, total hip femoral neck or distal 1/3 radius. (The forearm i.e. distal 1/3 radius is preferentially impacted by primary hyperparathyroidism as this area is rich in cortical bone.)
 - Vertebral fracture by x-ray, CT, MRI and vertebral fracture assessment
 - Estimated glomerular filtration rate of less than 60 ml/min
 - Urinary calcium excretion >400 mg in 24 hours
 - Nephrolithiasis or nephrocalcinosis by x-ray, ultrasound or CT
 - ◆ Asymptomatic individuals who cannot participate in appropriate medical surveillance
 - ◆ Asymptomatic individuals desiring definitive surgical management
- For cases of “normocalcemic hyperparathyroidism” in which primary hyperparathyroidism is not confirmed, additional investigation for secondary/tertiary causes of hyperparathyroidism (renal insufficiency, hypercalciuria as a primary renal abnormality, vitamin D deficiency and gastrointestinal malabsorption problems such as short gut syndrome, celiac disease, Crohn's disease or a prior Roux-en-Y bypass surgery) is indicated¹.

- For cases of hypercalcemia in which primary hyperparathyroidism is not confirmed, additional consideration for other causes of hypercalcemia (malignancy including PTH-RP mediated and myeloma, granulomatous disease, FHH, medications including thiazide diuretics, excessive calcium/vitamin D supplementation and the history of or present lithium use) is indicated^{1,18}.

Parathyroid Incidentaloma (Neck-8.4)

- A mass incidentally found on neck imaging that may represent an enlarged parathyroid gland, should prompt laboratory testing including calcium and PTH levels.^{1,2,3,4,5}
 - ◆ If laboratory abnormalities suggest hyperparathyroidism, i.e. “functioning parathyroid incidentaloma,” see **Hyperparathyroidism (NECK- 8.3)** for imaging recommendations.
 - ◆ If there are no laboratory abnormalities and diagnoses other than parathyroid incidentaloma are suspected, see **Neck Mass/Swelling/Adenopathy (NECK- 5.1)** for imaging recommendations.
 - ◆ Parathyroid nuclear scans are commonly requested for an evaluation of a PTI however the sensitivity of these scans are low in individuals with normal calcium/PTH and no clinical symptoms of primary hyperparathyroidism.^{5,6} Reliance on either a positive scan or negative scan to decide if surgery is indicated is not supported by current literature.
- If a parathyroid incidentaloma is suspected on imaging prior to planned thyroid surgery or other head/neck surgery⁴, the following studies are indicated if ordered by the surgical team or any provider in consultation with the surgical team:
 - ◆ Parathyroid Planar Imaging (CPT[®] 78070), Parathyroid Planar Imaging with SPECT (CPT[®] 78071), or Parathyroid Planar Imaging with SPECT/CT (CPT[®] 78072) AND/OR Ultrasound (CPT[®] 76536) AND/OR 4D CT Neck without and with contrast (CPT[®] 70492)
- Ultrasound (US) Neck (CPT[®] 76536) annually if the mass was not removed surgically.³

Background and Supporting Information

- “Parathyroid incidentalomas” include parathyroid adenomas found unexpectedly at the time of surgery or seen on ultrasound.^{1,2,3,4,5,6}
- Normal sized parathyroid glands (~6mm) are not usually identified by most imaging modalities, so enlargement warrants laboratory evaluation to rule out pathologic causes such as primary hyperparathyroidism or rarely parathyroid carcinoma.^{1,2,3,4}
- Sonographic imaging features of a parathyroid incidentaloma (ovoid, hypoechoic, well circumscribed and adjacent to but separate from the thyroid either posteriorly or inferiorly) may have overlap with perithyroidal lymph nodes and exophytic thyroid nodules in a multinodular goiter.^{1,2,3,4}
- The literature does report cases of pathologically confirmed parathyroid adenomas/hyperplasia in individuals with normal serum calcium and PTH levels, so these enlarged parathyroid glands, may represent an early stage of hyperparathyroidism. It is unclear what percentage of non-functioning PTIs become hyper-secreting over time, but many of these masses are surgically managed.^{2,3,4,6}
- Normally sized and normally functioning parathyroid glands do not take up sestamibi or tetrofosmin.⁷ The likelihood of a positive parathyroid nuclear scan is low in the setting of normal calcium and PTH levels.^{5,6}
- Parathyroid fine needle aspiration biopsy has been used historically however its diagnostic use is limited, due to the potential for hemorrhage and fibrosis which make eventual surgical dissection and pathologic interpretation more difficult.^{1,4}

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Trachea and Bronchus (Neck-9)

Trachea and Bronchus – Imaging (Neck-9.1)

- Plain x-rays neck or chest and direct visualization of the upper airway (via laryngoscopy with or without bronchoscopy) are the initial imaging studies for evaluating individuals with suspected laryngotracheal pathology, prior to advanced imaging. Bronchoscopy can further evaluate the distal (endo) bronchial tree.
 - ◆ Suspected laryngotracheal disease can be identified by inspiratory or biphasic stridor and a characteristic flow-volume loop of PFTs.¹
- CT Neck with contrast (CPT® 70491) or without contrast (CPT® 70490) and/or CT Chest with contrast (CPT® 71260) or without contrast (CPT® 71250) can be performed to further evaluate abnormalities, which include laryngotracheal or bronchial anomaly, foreign bodies, or persistent segmental or lobar lung collapse seen on other imaging studies.^{1,2}
 - ◆ See Squamous Cell Carcinomas of the Head and Neck—Suspected/Diagnosis (ONC-3.1) for suspected laryngotracheal tumor
- CT Neck with contrast (CPT® 70491) or without contrast (CPT® 70490) for suspected subglottic stenosis (SGS) (See Background and Supporting Information) after evaluation by a specialist or by a provider in consultation with a specialist who has directly visualized the upper airway.
- Expiratory HRCT (CPT® 71250) is indicated in individuals with obstructive physiology tracheomalacia.¹
- The visualization of tracheal or bronchial “inspissation” or thickening of secretions, without an abnormality as described above, is not a risk for malignancy.³

Background and Supporting Information

- CT with multiplanar reformatting has proven comparable to rigid bronchoscopy with a 100% sensitivity and specificity of detecting SGS and for measuring length and grade of stenosis.⁵

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Neck Pain (Neck-10)

Neck Pain (Cervical) (Neck-10.1)

Torticollis and Dystonia (Neck-10.2)

Eagle's Syndrome (Neck-10.3)

Neck Pain (Cervical) (Neck-10.1)

- Neck pain is usually related to a specific process including pharyngitis, radiculopathy, adenopathy, mass, carotid dissection and torticollis, and therefore found elsewhere in these guidelines.¹
- For the evaluation of neck pain or other symptoms which may involve the cervical spine, including myelopathy and cervical radiculopathy¹ see **Spine Imaging Guidelines**.

Torticollis and Dystonia (Neck-10.2)

Older Child (beyond infancy) or Adult¹

- For trauma, CT Neck with contrast (CPT[®] 70491) and/or CT Cervical Spine without contrast (CPT[®] 72125) is the initial study to identify fracture or malalignment.
- For no trauma, CT Neck with contrast (CPT[®] 70491), and/or MRI Cervical Spine without contrast (CPT[®] 72141), or CT Cervical Spine without contrast (CPT[®] 72125) is the initial study to locate a soft tissue or neurological cause.
 - ◆ Positive→Further advanced imaging is not required if CT Neck or CT Cervical Spine has identified local cause.
 - ◆ Negative→MRI Brain without and with contrast (CPT[®] 70553) to exclude CNS cause.

Eagle's Syndrome (Neck-10.3)

- Also known as “Calcified stylohyoid ligament or Elongation of styloid process” syndromes. Can present with odynophagia, dysphagia, neck pain or vascular compression and may be triggered by movement. Often seen after tonsillectomy or pharyngeal trauma.^{4,5}
- See General Guidelines-Other Imaging Situations (HD-1.7) for general imaging recommendations and General Guidelines-CT and MR angiography (CTA and MRA) (HD-1.5) if there is concern for carotid compression.

Background and Supporting Information

- Torticollis or cervical dystonia is an abnormal twisting of the neck with head rotated or twisted. Its causes are many and may be congenital or acquired and caused by trauma, infection/inflammation, neoplasm and those less defined and idiopathic. It occurs more frequently in children and on the right side (75%).
- Retropharyngeal space abscess could be associated with torticollis because child would not move neck freely.

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Salivary Gland Disorders (Neck-11)

Salivary Gland Disorders (Neck-11.1)

- Xerostomia (Dry Mouth)
 - ◆ Salivary Gland Nuclear Imaging (one of CPT® 78230, CPT® 78231, or CPT® 78232) can be considered for any one of the following:
 - Dry mouth and either:
 - Sjögren's syndrome
 - Sialadenitis
 - History of head or neck radiation therapy
 - History of cerebral palsy
 - Parotid mass to allow preoperative diagnosis of Warthin's tumor
- Salivary Gland Stones, Sialadenitis or Stenosis:¹
 - ◆ CT Neck without contrast (CPT® 70490) and/or CT Maxillofacial area with contrast (CPT® 70487) or MRI Neck without and with contrast (CPT® 70543) may be approved.
 - ◆ Sialography (contrast dye injection) under fluoroscopy, may be performed to rule out a stone, with post-sialography CT (CPT® 70486), or post-sialography MRI (CPT® 70540).
- Parotid or Salivary Gland Mass
 - ◆ The following can be approved:²
 - MRI Orbits/Face/Neck without and with contrast preferred (CPT® 70543), or MRI Orbits/Face/Neck without contrast (CPT® 70540) OR
 - CT Neck with contrast (CPT® 70491) or CT Neck without contrast (CPT® 70490) or CT Maxillofacial area with contrast (CPT® 70487)
 - Ultrasound (CPT® 76536) may be approved as initial or additional imaging and does not need to be completed prior to the approval of advanced imaging

Background and Supporting Information

- CT Neck
- ◆ CT should be performed with IV contrast to distinguish vessels from lymph nodes and to confirm if a mass is hypervascular. Dual-phase CT imaging (without and with IV contrast) is not supported. CT performed only without IV contrast may be helpful in a small minority of cases including cases of follow-up for known salivary stones.
 - A recent study in the American Journal of Neuroradiology comparing contrast enhanced and non-contrast enhanced CT in the evaluation of sialolithiasis demonstrated excellent sensitivity and specificity with no false-positive results using contrast-enhanced CT alone. Benefits of initial contrast-enhanced CT include better evaluation of the ductal system, improved soft tissue contrast in assessing salivary masses and decreased radiation dose (compared to dual phase CT imaging (without and with IV contrast)).³

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Sore Throat, Odynophagia, and Hoarseness (Neck-12)

Definitions (Neck-12.0)

Sore Throat/Throat Pain/Odynophagia (Neck-12.1)

Hoarseness (Neck-12.2)

Definitions (Neck-12.0)

- Hoarseness – A symptoms of altered voice quality reported by the individual
- Dysphagia – Disordered or impaired swallowing ie. food impactions, globus sensation, choking/aspiration, regurgitation (See **Dysphagia and Esophageal Disorders (Neck-3.1)**)
- Odynophagia – Painful swallowing

Sore Throat/Throat Pain/Odynophagia (Neck-12.1)

See **Dysphagia and Esophageal Disorders (Neck-3.1)** for dysphagia as the primary symptom.

- Sore Throat/Throat Pain/Odynophagia
 - ◆ Imaging studies are not indicated for uncomplicated viral or streptococcal pharyngitis with sore throat³
 - See **Neck Mass/Swelling/Adenopathy (Neck-5.1)** for suspected complications of pharyngitis/tonsillitis, such as a cervical space abscess
 - ◆ Sore throat/throat pain/odynophagia that is persistent or progressive for two or more weeks, in spite of any treatment measures or observation:
 - Initial evaluation is laryngoscopy:
 - CT Neck with contrast (CPT[®] 70491) or MRI Neck without and with contrast (CPT[®] 70543) if the initial laryngoscopy is abnormal, or it is negative, and if there is a continued suspicion of submucosal tumor/lesion of the pharynx.^{2,4}
 - If subjective dysphagia AND odynophagia are both present and the initial laryngoscopy and neck exam are normal (i.e. no cervical space abscess or post-surgical complication is suspected), then barium esophagram is indicated prior to the advanced imaging studies of the neck listed above.^{5,6}
 - ◆ Alarm symptoms of persistent unilateral throat pain or odynophagia with ipsilateral referred otalgia is especially suspicious for a submucosal tumor of the head and neck.
 - Initial evaluation is laryngoscopy
 - CT Neck with contrast (CPT[®] 70491) or MRI Neck without and with contrast (CPT[®] 70543) if the initial laryngoscopy is abnormal or negative.
 - ◆ CT Neck with contrast (CPT[®] 70491) for postoperative throat pain or odynophagia after head and neck procedure with suspected complication of procedure.⁴

Hoarseness (Neck-12.2)

- Laryngoscopy is the primary diagnostic modality for evaluating individuals with hoarseness. Imaging studies, including CT and MRI, are unnecessary in most individuals with hoarseness because most hoarseness is self-limited or caused by pathology that can be identified by laryngoscopy alone.
- The need for advanced imaging is based upon abnormal findings upon

laryngoscopy,¹ such as:

- ◆ Immobile or partially mobile vocal cord [See **Recurrent Laryngeal Nerve Palsy (HD-7.1)**]
- ◆ Any growth, asymmetry, ulceration, or other suspected neoplasm of the glottis or supraglottis [See **Neck Mass/Swelling/Adenopathy (Neck 5.1)**]

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Policy History and Instructions for Use

Guideline

Policy History and Instructions for Use

Policy History and Instructions for Use

Policy History and Instructions for Use V1.0.2023

Instructions for Use

This Medical Policy provides assistance in interpreting United HealthCare Services, Inc. standard benefit plans. When deciding coverage, the federal, state (Ohio Administrative Code [OAC]) or contractual requirements for benefit plan coverage must be referenced as the terms of the federal, state (OAC) or contractual requirements for benefit plan coverage may differ from the standard benefit plan. In the event of a conflict, the federal, state (OAC) or contractual requirements for benefit plan coverage govern.

Before using this policy, please check the federal, state (OAC) or contractual requirements for benefit plan coverage. United HealthCare Services, Inc. reserves the right to modify its Policies and Guidelines as necessary. This Medical Policy is provided for informational purposes. It does not constitute medical advice.

United HealthCare Services, Inc. uses InterQual® for the primary medical/surgical criteria, and the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) for substance use, in administering health benefits. If InterQual® does not have applicable criteria, United HealthCare Services, Inc. may also use United HealthCare Services, Inc.'s Medical Policies, Coverage Determination Guidelines, and/ or Utilization Review Guidelines that have been approved by the Ohio Department for Medicaid Services. The United HealthCare Services, Inc.'s Medical Policies, Coverage Determination Guidelines, and Utilization Review Guidelines are intended to be used in connection with the independent professional medical judgment of a qualified health care provider and do not constitute the practice of medicine or medical advice.

Policy History/Revision Information

Date	Summary of Changes
XX/XX/202X	
XX/XX/202X	