

CLINICAL APPROPRIATENESS GUIDELINES

ADVANCED IMAGING

Appropriate Use Criteria: Imaging of the Abdomen and Pelvis

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*Approval and implementation dates for specific health plans may vary. Please consult the applicable health plan for more details.
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Table of Contents

Appropriate Use Criteria: Imaging of the Abdomen and Pelvis	1
Table of Contents	2
Description and Application of the Guidelines	5
General Clinical Guideline	6
Clinical Appropriateness Framework	6
Simultaneous Ordering of Multiple Diagnostic or Therapeutic Interventions	6
Repeat Diagnostic Intervention	6
Repeat Therapeutic Intervention	7
Imaging of the Abdomen and Pelvis	8
General Information/Overview	8
Scope	8
Technology Considerations	8
Definitions	9
Clinical Indications	11
General Abdominal and Pelvic Indications	11
Congenital and developmental conditions, not otherwise specified	11
Infectious and inflammatory conditions including abscess– not otherwise specified	12
Trauma, not otherwise specified	12
Tumor or neoplasm – not otherwise specified	12
Female Reproductive System and Obstetric Indications	13
Adenomyosis	13
Adnexal mass	13
Endometriosis	13
Obstetric indications	14
Uterine artery embolization procedures	14
Gastrointestinal Indications	14
Appendicitis	14
Bowel obstruction	15
Constipation (Pediatric only)	15
Diverticulitis	16
Enteritis or colitis, not otherwise specified	16
Gastrointestinal bleeding	16
Inflammatory bowel disease (including Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis)	17
Intussusception (Pediatric only)	17
Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) – see abdominal pain	18
Perianal fistula/abscess (fistula in ano)	18
Hepatobiliary Indications	18
Biliary tract dilatation or obstruction	18
Cholecystitis	18
Choledocholithiasis	19

Diffuse liver disease	19
Focal liver lesion.....	20
Hepatomegaly	22
Jaundice	22
Primary sclerosing cholangitis	22
Osseous Indications.....	22
Avascular necrosis, bilateral hip	22
Axial spondyloarthritis	23
Developmental hip dysplasia (Pediatric only)	24
Osseous tumor	24
Osteoid osteoma	24
Osteomyelitis.....	24
Pelvic fracture.....	25
Sacroiliitis, not otherwise specified	25
Septic arthritis.....	26
Pancreatic Indications.....	26
Pancreatic mass, indeterminate solid	26
Pancreatic mass, indeterminate cystic (IPMN/IPMT)	26
Pancreatitis.....	27
Renal, Adrenal, and Urinary Tract Indications	27
Azotemia	27
Adrenal mass, indeterminate.....	28
Bladder or urethral diverticula.....	29
Hematuria.....	29
Hydronephrosis	30
Nephrocalcinosis	30
Polycystic kidney disease.....	30
Pyelonephritis.....	30
Renal artery stenosis/Renovascular hypertension	31
Renal mass	31
Urinary tract calculi.....	32
Splenic Indications	33
Splenic mass, benign	33
Splenic mass, indeterminate	33
Splenomegaly.....	34
Miscellaneous Conditions.....	34
Hemoperitoneum	34
Hernia.....	34
Lymphadenopathy	35
Pelvic floor disorders associated with urinary or bowel incontinence	35
Retroperitoneal conditions	35
Sports hernia (athletic pubalgia).....	36

Nonspecific Signs and Symptoms **36**
 Abdominal and/or pelvic pain, undifferentiated.....36
 Fever of unknown origin38
 Lower extremity edema39
 Weight loss.....39
References **39**
Codes..... **46**
History..... **46**

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Description and Application of the Guidelines

The AIM Clinical Appropriateness Guidelines (hereinafter “the AIM Clinical Appropriateness Guidelines” or the “Guidelines”) are designed to assist providers in making the most appropriate treatment decision for a specific clinical condition for an individual. As used by AIM, the Guidelines establish objective and evidence-based criteria for medical necessity determinations where possible. In the process, multiple functions are accomplished:

- To establish criteria for when services are medically necessary
- To assist the practitioner as an educational tool
- To encourage standardization of medical practice patterns
- To curtail the performance of inappropriate and/or duplicate services
- To advocate for patient safety concerns
- To enhance the quality of health care
- To promote the most efficient and cost-effective use of services

The AIM guideline development process complies with applicable accreditation standards, including the requirement that the Guidelines be developed with involvement from appropriate providers with current clinical expertise relevant to the Guidelines under review and be based on the most up-to-date clinical principles and best practices. Relevant citations are included in the References section attached to each Guideline. AIM reviews all of its Guidelines at least annually.

AIM makes its Guidelines publicly available on its website twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Copies of the AIM Clinical Appropriateness Guidelines are also available upon oral or written request. Although the Guidelines are publicly-available, AIM considers the Guidelines to be important, proprietary information of AIM, which cannot be sold, assigned, leased, licensed, reproduced or distributed without the written consent of AIM.

AIM applies objective and evidence-based criteria, and takes individual circumstances and the local delivery system into account when determining the medical appropriateness of health care services. The AIM Guidelines are just guidelines for the provision of specialty health services. These criteria are designed to guide both providers and reviewers to the most appropriate services based on a patient’s unique circumstances. In all cases, clinical judgment consistent with the standards of good medical practice should be used when applying the Guidelines. Guideline determinations are made based on the information provided at the time of the request. It is expected that medical necessity decisions may change as new information is provided or based on unique aspects of the patient’s condition. The treating clinician has final authority and responsibility for treatment decisions regarding the care of the patient and for justifying and demonstrating the existence of medical necessity for the requested service. The Guidelines are not a substitute for the experience and judgment of a physician or other health care professionals. Any clinician seeking to apply or consult the Guidelines is expected to use independent medical judgment in the context of individual clinical circumstances to determine any patient’s care or treatment.

The Guidelines do not address coverage, benefit or other plan specific issues. Applicable federal and state coverage mandates take precedence over these clinical guidelines. If requested by a health plan, AIM will review requests based on health plan medical policy/guidelines in lieu of the AIM Guidelines.

The Guidelines may also be used by the health plan or by AIM for purposes of provider education, or to review the medical necessity of services by any provider who has been notified of the need for medical necessity review, due to billing practices or claims that are not consistent with other providers in terms of frequency or some other manner.

General Clinical Guideline

Clinical Appropriateness Framework

Critical to any finding of clinical appropriateness under the guidelines for a specific diagnostic or therapeutic intervention are the following elements:

- Prior to any intervention, it is essential that the clinician confirm the diagnosis or establish its pretest likelihood based on a complete evaluation of the patient. This includes a history and physical examination and, where applicable, a review of relevant laboratory studies, diagnostic testing, and response to prior therapeutic intervention.
- The anticipated benefit of the recommended intervention should outweigh any potential harms that may result (net benefit).
- Current literature and/or standards of medical practice should support that the recommended intervention offers the greatest net benefit among competing alternatives.
- Based on the clinical evaluation, current literature, and standards of medical practice, there exists a reasonable likelihood that the intervention will change management and/or lead to an improved outcome for the patient.

If these elements are not established with respect to a given request, the determination of appropriateness will most likely require a peer-to-peer conversation to understand the individual and unique facts that would supersede the requirements set forth above. During the peer-to-peer conversation, factors such as patient acuity and setting of service may also be taken into account.

Simultaneous Ordering of Multiple Diagnostic or Therapeutic Interventions

Requests for multiple diagnostic or therapeutic interventions at the same time will often require a peer-to-peer conversation to understand the individual circumstances that support the medical necessity of performing all interventions simultaneously. This is based on the fact that appropriateness of additional intervention is often dependent on the outcome of the initial intervention.

Additionally, either of the following may apply:

- Current literature and/or standards of medical practice support that one of the requested diagnostic or therapeutic interventions is more appropriate in the clinical situation presented; or
- One of the diagnostic or therapeutic interventions requested is more likely to improve patient outcomes based on current literature and/or standards of medical practice.

Repeat Diagnostic Intervention

In general, repeated testing of the same anatomic location for the same indication should be limited to evaluation following an intervention, or when there is a change in clinical status such that additional testing is required to determine next steps in management. At times, it may be necessary to repeat a test using different techniques or protocols to clarify a finding or result of the original study.

Repeated testing for the same indication using the same or similar technology may be subject to additional review or require peer-to-peer conversation in the following scenarios:

- Repeated diagnostic testing at the same facility due to technical issues
- Repeated diagnostic testing requested at a different facility due to provider preference or quality concerns
- Repeated diagnostic testing of the same anatomic area based on persistent symptoms with no clinical change, treatment, or intervention since the previous study
- Repeated diagnostic testing of the same anatomic area by different providers for the same member over a short period of time

Repeat Therapeutic Intervention

In general, repeated therapeutic intervention in the same anatomic area is considered appropriate when the prior intervention proved effective or beneficial and the expected duration of relief has lapsed. A repeat intervention requested prior to the expected duration of relief is not appropriate unless it can be confirmed that the prior intervention was never administered.

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