

# Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation (NMES) (NCD 160.12)

<b>Policy Number</b>	160.12	<b>Approved By</b>	UnitedHealthcare Medicare Reimbursement Policy Committee	<b>Current Approval Date</b>	08/27/2014
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## IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT THIS REIMBURSEMENT POLICY

This policy is applicable to UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage Plans offered by UnitedHealthcare and its affiliates.

You are responsible for submission of accurate claims. This reimbursement policy is intended to ensure that you are reimbursed based on the code or codes that correctly describe the health care services provided. UnitedHealthcare reimbursement policies use Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®\*), Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), or other coding guidelines. References to CPT or other sources are for definitional purposes only and do not imply any right to reimbursement.

This reimbursement policy applies to all health care services billed on CMS 1500 forms and, when specified, to those billed on UB04 forms (CMS 1450). Coding methodology, industry-standard reimbursement logic, regulatory requirements, benefits design and other factors are considered in developing reimbursement policy. This information is intended to serve only as a general resource regarding UnitedHealthcare's reimbursement policy for the services described and is not intended to address every aspect of a reimbursement situation. Accordingly, UnitedHealthcare may use reasonable discretion in interpreting and applying this policy to health care services provided in a particular case. Further, the policy does not address all issues related to reimbursement for health care services provided to UnitedHealthcare enrollees. Other factors affecting reimbursement may supplement, modify or, in some cases, supersede this policy. These factors may include, but are not limited to: legislative mandates, the physician or other provider contracts, and/or the enrollee's benefit coverage documents. Finally, this policy may not be implemented exactly the same way on the different electronic claims processing systems used by UnitedHealthcare due to programming or other constraints; however, UnitedHealthcare strives to minimize these variations.

UnitedHealthcare may modify this reimbursement policy at any time by publishing a new version of the policy on this Website. However, the information presented in this policy is accurate and current as of the date of publication.

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## Application

This reimbursement policy applies to services reported using the Health Insurance Claim Form CMS-1500 or its electronic equivalent or its successor form, and services reported using facility claim form CMS-1450 or its electronic equivalent or its successor form. This policy applies to all products, all network and non-network physicians, and other health care professionals.

The HCPCS/CPT code(s) may be subject to Correct Coding Initiative (CCI) edits. This policy does not take precedence over CCI edits. Please refer to the CCI for correct coding guidelines and specific applicable code combinations prior to billing UnitedHealthcare. It is not enough to link the procedure code to a correct, payable ICD-9-CM diagnosis code. The diagnosis must be present for the procedure to be paid. Compliance with the provisions in this policy is subject to monitoring by pre-payment review and/or post-payment data analysis and subsequent medical review. The effective date of changes/additions/deletions to this policy is the committee meeting date unless otherwise indicated. CPT codes and descriptions are copyright 2010 American Medical Association (or such other date of publication of CPT). All rights reserved. CPT is a registered trademark of the American Medical Association. Applicable FARS/DFARS restrictions apply to Government use. Fee schedules, relative value units, conversion factors, and/or related components are not assigned by the AMA, are not part of CPT, and the AMA is not recommending their use. The AMA does not directly or indirectly practice medicine or dispense medical services. The AMA assumes no liability for data contained or not contained herein. Current Dental Terminology (CDT), including procedure codes, nomenclature, descriptors, and other data contained therein, is copyright by the American Dental Association, 2002, 2004. All rights reserved. CDT is a registered trademark of the American Dental Association. Applicable FARS/DFARS apply.

## Summary

### Overview

NMES involves the use of a device which transmits an electrical impulse to the skin over selected muscle groups by way of electrodes. There are two broad categories of NMES. One type of device stimulates the muscle when the patient is in a resting state to treat muscle atrophy. The second type is used to enhance functional activity of neurologically impaired patients.

### Reimbursement Guidelines

#### Treatment of Muscle Atrophy

Coverage of NMES to treat muscle atrophy is limited to the treatment of disuse atrophy where nerve supply to the muscle is intact, including brain, spinal cord and peripheral nerves, and other non-neurological reasons for disuse atrophy. Some examples would be casting or splinting of a limb, contracture due to scarring of soft tissue as in burn lesions, and hip replacement surgery (until orthotic training begins). (See §160.13 of the NCD Manual for an explanation of coverage of medically necessary supplies for the effective use of NMES.)

#### Use for Walking in Patients with Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)

The type of NMES that is used to enhance the ability to walk of SCI patients is commonly referred to as functional electrical stimulation (FES). These devices are surface units that use electrical impulses to activate paralyzed or weak muscles in precise sequence. Coverage for the use of NMES/FES is limited to SCI patients for walking, who have completed a training program which consists of at least 32 physical therapy sessions with the device over a period of three months. The trial period of physical therapy will enable the physician treating the patient for his or her spinal cord injury to properly evaluate the person's ability to use these devices frequently and for the long term. Physical therapy necessary to perform this training must be directly performed by the physical therapist as part of a one-on-one training program.

The goal of physical therapy must be to train SCI patients on the use of NMES/FES devices to achieve walking, not to reverse or retard muscle atrophy.

Coverage for NMES/FES for walking will be covered in SCI patients with all of the following characteristics:

1. Persons with intact lower motor units (L1 and below) (both muscle and peripheral nerve);
2. Persons with muscle and joint stability for weight bearing at upper and lower extremities that can demonstrate balance and control to maintain an upright support posture independently;
3. Persons that demonstrate brisk muscle contraction to NMES and have sensory perception electrical stimulation sufficient for muscle contraction;
4. Persons that possess high motivation, commitment and cognitive ability to use such devices for walking;

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5. Persons that can transfer independently and can demonstrate independent standing tolerance for at least 3 minutes;
6. Persons that can demonstrate hand and finger function to manipulate controls;
7. Persons with at least 6-month post recovery spinal cord injury and restorative surgery;
8. Persons without hip and knee degenerative disease and no history of long bone fracture secondary to osteoporosis; and
9. Persons who have demonstrated a willingness to use the device long-term.

NMES/FES for walking will not be covered in SCI patient with any of the following:

1. Persons with cardiac pacemakers;
2. Severe scoliosis or severe osteoporosis;
3. Skin disease or cancer at area of stimulation;
4. Irreversible contracture; or
5. Autonomic dysflexia.

The only settings where therapists with the sufficient skills to provide these services are employed, are inpatient hospitals; outpatient hospitals; comprehensive outpatient rehabilitation facilities; and outpatient rehabilitation facilities. The physical therapy necessary to perform this training must be part of a one-on-one training program.

Additional therapy after the purchase of the DME would be limited by our general policies in converge of skilled physical therapy.

### CPT/HCPCS Codes

Code	Description
97032	Application of a modality to 1 or more areas; electrical stimulation (manual), each 15 minutes
97116	Therapeutic procedure, 1 or more areas, each 15 minutes; gait training (includes stair climbing)
E0745	Neuromuscular stimulator, electronic shock unit (Non Covered Per Medicare)
E0764	Functional neuromuscular stimulation, transcutaneous stimulation of sequential muscle groups of ambulation with computer control, used for walking by spinal cord injured, entire system, after completion of training program (Investigational)

### Modifiers

Code	Description
GO	Services delivered under an outpatient occupational therapy plan of care
GP	Services delivered under an outpatient physical therapy plan of care

### References Included (but not limited to):

#### CMS NCD(s)

NCD 160.12 Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation (NMES)

Reference NCD: NCD 160.13 Supplies Used in the Delivery of Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) and Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation (NMES)

#### CMS LCD(s)

Numerous LCDs

#### CMS Article(s)

Numerous Articles

#### CMS Benefit Policy Manual

Chapter 15; § 220 Coverage of Outpatient Rehabilitation Therapy Services (Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Speech-Language Pathology Services) Under Medical Insurance

#### CMS Claims Processing Manual

Chapter 5; § 10 Part B Outpatient Rehabilitation and Comprehensive Outpatient Rehabilitation Facility (CORF) Services – General, § 20 HCPCS Coding Requirement

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## CMS Transmittals

Transmittal AB-02-156, Change Request 2314, Dated 11/01/2002 (Coverage and Billing for Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation (NMES))

## UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage Coverage Summaries

Stimulators - Electrical and Spinal Cord Stimulators

## UnitedHealthcare Reimbursement Policies

Electrotherapy for Treatment of Facial Nerve Paralysis (Bell's Palsy) (NCD 160.15)

Treatment of Motor Function Disorders with Electric Nerve Stimulation (NCD 160.2)

## UnitedHealthcare Medical Policies

Electrical Stimulation For The Treatment Of Pain And Muscle Rehabilitation

## MLN Matters

Article MM8304, Detailed Written Orders and Face-to-Face Encounters

## Others

Coverage Issues Manual Medical Procedures, § 35-77 Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation (NMES) In The Treatment Of Disuse Atrophy, DMERC Website

## History

Date	Revisions
08/23/2014	Annual review
07/24/2013	Annual review, no changes
11/30/2011	Annual review, no changes