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## **Aquatic Therapy**

**Policy Number: HS-189**

**Original Effective Date: 9/16/2010**

**Revised Date(s): 9/1/2011**

### **DISCLAIMER**

The Clinical Coverage Guideline is intended to supplement certain standard WellCare benefit plans. The terms of a member's particular Benefit Plan, Evidence of Coverage, Certificate of Coverage, etc., may differ significantly from this Coverage Position. For example, a member's benefit plan may contain specific exclusions related to the topic addressed in this Clinical Coverage Guideline. When a conflict exists between the two documents, the Member's Benefit Plan always supersedes the information contained in the Clinical Coverage Guideline. Additionally, Clinical Coverage Guidelines relate exclusively to the administration of health benefit plans and are NOT recommendations for treatment, nor should they be used as treatment guidelines. The application of the Clinical Coverage Guideline is subject to the benefit determinations set forth by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) National and Local Coverage Determinations and state-specific Medicaid mandates, if any.

### **APPLICATION STATEMENT**

The application of the Clinical Coverage Guideline is subject to the benefit determinations set forth by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) National and Local Coverage Determinations and state-specific Medicaid mandates, if any.

## BACKGROUND

Aquatic therapy is an active therapeutic intervention that takes place in water. The aquatic environment provides buoyancy, increased resistance (i.e., viscosity) and warmth. The advantage of buoyancy is direct: when a person enters the water, there is an immediate reduction in the effect of gravity on the body. The advantage of viscosity of water is indirect: when the person moves through the water, resistance is felt. This is also referred to as accommodating resistance because it matches the individual's applied force or effort. Because the resistance of the water equals the force exerted, the likelihood of exacerbation or re-injury is reduced dramatically. Advocates of aquatic therapy have proposed that water allows ease of active movement, trunk stabilization, relaxation of spastic muscles, improved circulation, strengthening and functional activity training.

### *Safety and Certification*

Practitioners of aquatic therapy must abide by all safety and certification standards detailed in "Safety Standards for Aquatic Therapy and Rehabilitation Practitioners" published by the Aquatic Therapy and Rehabilitation Institute (2004). Please see reference link below.

## POSITION STATEMENT

Aquatic therapy for the improvement or restoration of physical function following disease, injury, or loss of body part **is considered medically necessary** if ALL of the following criteria are met:

- The service is performed under the direct supervision of a licensed physical therapist with a physician's order; **AND**,
- The therapeutic interventions rendered are directly related to a written treatment regimen that includes goals approved and signed by the physician; **AND**,
- The member must have impairments, functional limitations or disabilities that can be minimized or eliminated with aquatic therapy; **AND**,
- The member must be able to benefit from the unique properties of water (i.e. buoyancy, hydrodynamics, and hydrostatic pressure); **AND**,
- A member selected for aquatic therapy must be unable to safely participate in a physical therapy program that is totally land based due to weight bearing restrictions, severe weakness or other considerations; **AND**,
- The documentation must support the necessity of this intervention; **AND**,
- The aquatic therapy rendered must require the skills of a physical therapist; **AND**,
- A qualified therapist is physically present and actively involved in treatment; **AND**,
- The aquatic therapy services rendered are considered acceptable standards of medical practice for the member's condition.

Aquatic therapy for any circumstance or indication not mentioned above **is considered NOT medically necessary and/or experimental and investigational**.

NOTE: Aquatic therapy is considered to be a physical therapy modality and is subject to all existing physical therapy guidelines and plan benefit limits for physical therapy.

NOTE: The physical therapist must have direct, one-on-one, contact with the member when performing and reporting aquatic therapy. Supervising multiple members in a pool at one time and billing for each of these members per 15 minutes of therapy time is inappropriate. Aquatic therapy delivered in a group therapy setting is NOT covered.

NOTE: Aquatic therapy performed by an occupational therapist, or any other non-physical therapist, is NOT covered.

**CODING**

**Covered CPT® Codes**

**97113** One-on-one therapy provided in the pool by Physical Therapist(s);  
Aquatic Therapy, one or more areas, each 15 minutes with therapeutic exercises

**ICD-9-CM Procedure Code**

**93.39** Aquatic Physical Therapy

**HCPCS Codes** - No applicable code for aquatic therapy.

**Covered ICD-9-CM Diagnosis Codes**

**V57.1** Other Physical Therapy; Aquatic Therapeutic & remedial exercises, except breathing

**Underlying diagnoses for Aquatic Physical Therapy – This list may not be all inclusive**

**138** Late Effect of Acute Poliomyelitis  
**618.83** Pelvic muscle wasting  
**711.00 - 711.99** Pyogenic Arthritis Site Unspecified; Unspecified Infective Arthritis involving multiple sites  
**712.10 - 712.19** Chondrocalcinosis due to Dicalcium Phosphate Crystals unspecified site;  
Chondrocalcinosis due to Dicalcium phosphate Crystals, multiple sites  
**712.30 - 712.99** Chondrocalcinosis cause unspecified involving unspecified site;  
Unspecified crystal arthropathy involving multiple sites.  
**713.0 - 713.8** Arthropathy associates with other Endocrine and Metabolic disorders;  
Arthropathy associated with other conditions classifiable elsewhere  
**714.0 - 714.4** Rheumatoid arthritis; Chronic Post-rheumatic arthropathy  
**714.89 - 714.9** Other specified inflammatory polyarthropathies; Unspecified inflammatory polyarthropathy  
**715.00 - 715.98** Osteoarthritis generalized involving unspecified site ;  
Osteoarthritis unspecified whether generalized or localized involving other specified sites  
**716.00 - 716.59** Kaschin-Beck Disease Site Unspecified; Unspecified Polyarthropathy or Polyarthritits involving  
multiple sites.  
**718.20 - 718.29** Pathological dislocation of joint site unspecified; Pathological Dislocation of Joint of multiple sites.  
**718.30 - 718.39** Recurrent Dislocation of Joint Site unspecified; Recurrent Dislocation of Joint of multiple sites.  
**718.40 - 718.49** Contracture of joint site unspecified; Contracture of joint of multiple sites.  
**719.00 - 719.59** Effusion of joint site unspecified; Stiffness of joint not elsewhere classified involving multiple sites.  
**720.0 - 720.89** Ankylosing spondylitis; Other inflammatory spondylopathies

**Underlying diagnoses for Aquatic Physical Therapy continued - This list may not be all inclusive**

**721.0 - 721.91** Cervical spondylosis without myelopathy; Spondylosis of unspecified site with myelopathy  
**722.0 - 722.93** Displacement of cervical intervertebral disc without myelopathy; Other/Unspecified disc disorder  
of lumbar region  
**723.0 - 723.5** Spinal stenosis in cervical region; Torticollis unspecified  
**724.01 - 724.79** Spinal stenosis of thoracic region; Other disorders of coccyx  
**726.0 - 726.91** Adhesive capsulitis of shoulder; Exostosis of unspecified site  
**727.00 - 727.67** Synovitis and tenosynovitis unspecified; Non-traumatic rupture of Achilles tendon  
**727.81** Contracture of tendon (sheath)  
**728.11 - 728.12** Progressive Myositis Ossificans; Traumatic Myositis Ossificans

<b>728.2</b>	Muscular wasting and disuse atrophy not elsewhere classified
<b>728.6</b>	Contracture of palmar fascia
<b>728.71</b>	Plantar fascial fibromatosis
<b>728.83</b>	Rupture of muscle non-traumatic
<b>728.85</b>	Spasm of muscle
<b>729.1</b>	Myalgia and Myositis unspecified
<b>729.4</b>	Fasciitis unspecified
<b>729.5</b>	Pain in limb
<b>729.81 - 729.82</b>	Swelling of limb; Cramp of Limb

\*Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) 2011 American Medical Association: Chicago, IL.®©

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### **Government Agencies, Professional and Medical Organizations**

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**HISTORY AND REVISIONS**

Date	Action
12/1/2011	• New template design approved by MPC.
9/1/2011	• Approved by MPC.