

Medical Policy



Title: Panniculectomy and Abdominoplasty

Professional

Original Effective Date: November 2000
 Revision Date(s): October 6, 2004;
 September 7, 2005; February 17, 2006;
 October 31, 2006; December 18, 2006;
 March 1, 2007
 Current Effective Date: October 19, 2009

Institutional

Original Effective Date: January 1, 2005
 Revision Date(s): September 7, 2005;
 February 17, 2006; October 31, 2006;
 December 18, 2006; March 1, 2007
 Current Effective Date: October 19, 2009

DESCRIPTION

Panniculectomy is a surgical procedure used to remove a panniculus, which is an “apron” of fat and skin that hangs from the front of the abdomen.

Abdominoplasty is a surgical procedure intended to remove excess skin and /or fat, and to tighten the muscles of the abdomen.

POLICY

- A. Panniculectomy is considered **medically necessary** for the patient who meets all the following criteria:
1. The panniculus hangs below the lower level of the pubis (which is documented in photographs); AND
 2. The patient has had significant weight loss and reached a BMI ≤ 30 kg/m² as well as the following:
 - The patient has maintained a stable weight for at least six months AND
 - If the patient has had bariatric surgery, he/she is at least 18 months post operative; AND
 3. Has recurrent or chronic rashes, infections, cellulitis, or non-healing ulcers, that do not respond to conventional treatment for a period of three months
- B. Panniculectomy may be considered **medically necessary** with the performance of colostomy to prevent distention of the colostomy. With a very large abdominal wall, it may also be difficult to mobilize enough colon without compromising blood supply to the colon.

- C. Panniculectomy may be considered **medically necessary** for chronic infections of the panniculus that have failed to heal despite medically supervised care at a wound center.
- D. Panniculectomy is considered **not medically necessary** as an adjunct to other medically necessary procedures, including, but not limited to, hysterectomy, and/or incisional or ventral hernia repair unless the criteria for medical necessity for panniculectomy listed in A. are met.
- E. Panniculectomy for the treatment of back pain is considered **not medically necessary**.
- F. Repair of diastasis rectus alone is considered **not medically necessary** for all indications.
- G. Abdominoplasty, when done to remove excess skin or fat with or without tightening of the underlying muscles is considered **cosmetic, and therefore not covered**.
- H. Liposuction is considered **cosmetic, and therefore not covered**.
- I. If a condition such as a pannus results from a contract excluded procedure such as bariatric surgery, the panniculectomy/abdominoplasty will also be considered an excluded condition.

Documentation of a ventral hernia requires size of the hernia, whether it is reducible, painful or other symptoms, and whether there is a defect rather than just thinning of the abdominal fascia.

RATIONALE

The current medical evidence addressing the efficacy of panniculectomy consists mostly of individual case reports and review articles. There have been only a very limited number of small-scale controlled trials on the subject. However, this is adequate clinical opinion to support the use of this procedure in limited circumstances where a patient's health is jeopardized.

There is not adequate evidence that pannus contributes to hernia formation or recurrence. The primary cause of hernia formation is an abdominal wall defect or weakness, not a pulling effect from a pannus.

Diastasis rectus is a thinning out of the anterior abdominal wall fascia. It does not represent a true hernia and is of no clinical significance.

Weight stability is required before panniculectomy. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) *Practice Parameter for Surgical Treatment of Skin Redundancy for*

Obese and Massive Weight Loss Patients (2007) recommends that body contouring surgery, including panniculectomy, be performed only after the patient maintains a stable weight for two to six months. For post bariatric surgery patients, this is reported to occur 12-18 months after surgery when the BMI has reached the 25 kg/m² to 30 kg/m² range (Rubin, 2004). If performed prematurely, a potential exists for a second panniculus to develop once additional weight loss has occurred and the risks of postoperative complications are increased.

There is little evidence to demonstrate any significant health benefit imparted by abdominoplasty either for diastasis recti, or for other indications. Improvements in physical functioning, cessation of back pain and other positive health outcomes have not been demonstrated. Surgical procedures to correct diastasis recti have not been demonstrated to be effective for alleviating back pain or other non-cosmetic conditions. At this time, there is insufficient evidence to support the use of surgical procedures to correct diastasis recti, for other than cosmetic purposes.

Although it has been suggested that the presence of a large overhanging panniculus may interfere with the surgery or compromise post-operative recovery, there is insufficient evidence to support the proposed benefits of improved surgical site access or improved health outcomes.

CODING

The following codes for treatment and procedures applicable to this policy are included below for informational purposes. Inclusion or exclusion of a procedure, diagnosis or device code(s) does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement. Please refer to the member's contract benefits in effect at the time of service to determine coverage or non-coverage of these services as it applies to an individual member.

CPT

- 00802 Anesthesia for procedures on lower anterior abdominal wall; panniculectomy
- 15830 Excision, excessive skin and subcutaneous tissue (includes lipectomy); abdomen, infraumbilical panniculectomy
- 15847 Excision, excessive skin and subcutaneous tissue (includes lipectomy); abdomen, (e.g., abdominoplasty) (includes umbilical transposition and fascial plication) (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)
- 15877 Suction assisted lipectomy; trunk

DIAGNOSIS

- 278.00 Obesity, unspecified
- 278.01 Morbid obesity
- 728.84 Diastasis of muscle

REVISIONS

09-07-2005	Added "Description" heading and a description.
02-17-2006	In "Coding" title, added "NOTE: Use of any diagnosis code does not guarantee reimbursement. Medical necessity will be based on documentation in the clinical record." In "Coding" section, covered diagnosis, added ICD-9 278.00 and 278.01 and removed 86.83.
10-31-2006 Effective 01-01-2007	In "Coding" title, deleted "NOTE: Use of any diagnosis code does not guarantee reimbursement. Medical necessity will be based on documentation in the clinical record." In "Coding" section, deleted CPT code 15831 and added CPT codes 15830 and 15847 due to the 2007 CPT changes.
12-18-2006 Effective 03-01-2007	In "Policy" section deleted the statement "If panniculectomy/abdominoplasty is denied, the other procedure, i.e., incisional hernia repair, will also be denied content" from the paragraph "Panniculectomy is considered cosmetic as an adjunct... as recommended by the Medical Director
10-19-2009	The Description section was updated. The Policy section was updated. The previous policy language was: If a condition such as a pannus results from a contract excluded procedure such as bariatric surgery, the panniculectomy/abdominoplasty will also be considered an excluded condition. Panniculectomy and abdominoplasty are considered medically necessary for the patient who meets all the following criteria: The panniculus hangs below the level of the pubis (which is documented in photographs); AND The patient has had significant weight loss of 100 pounds or more, as well as the following: The patient has maintained a stable weight for at least six months AND If the patient has had bariatric surgery, he/she is at least 18 months post operative; AND Recurrent or chronic rashes, infections, cellulitis, or non-healing ulcers, that do not respond to conventional treatment for a period of three months; information must be documented in office visit records. Panniculectomy is considered cosmetic as an adjunct to other medically necessary procedures, including, but not limited to, hysterectomy, and/or incisional or ventral hernia repair unless the criteria for medical necessity for panniculectomy listed above are met. There is no adequate evidence that pannus contributes to hernia formation or recurrence. The primary cause of hernia formation is an abdominal wall defect or weakness, not a pulling effect from a pannus. Panniculectomy or abdominoplasty for the treatment of back pain is considered not medically necessary. Repair of diastasis rectus alone is considered cosmetic for all indications. Diastasis rectus is a thinning out of the anterior abdominal wall fascia. It does not represent a true hernia

	<p>and is of no clinical significance. Documentation of a ventral hernia requires size of the hernia, whether it is reducible, painful or other symptoms, and whether there is a defect rather than just thinning of the abdominal fascia.</p> <p>Liposuction is considered cosmetic.</p> <p>Weight stability is required before panniculectomy. If performed prematurely there is the potential for a second panniculus to develop once additional weight loss has occurred.</p> <p>There is little evidence to demonstrate any significant health benefit imparted by abdominoplasty either for diastasis recti, or for other indications. Improvements in physical functioning, cessation of back pain and other positive health outcomes have not been demonstrated. Surgical procedures to correct diastasis recti have not been demonstrated to be effective for alleviating back pain or other non-cosmetic conditions. At this time, there is insufficient evidence to support the use of surgical procedures to correct diastasis recti, for other than cosmetic purposes.</p> <p>The policy updates pertained to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revised wording from "...significant weight loss of 100 pounds or more..." to "...significant weight loss and reached a BMI \leq 30 kg/m²..." ▪ Added indications "B. Panniculectomy may be considered medically necessary with the performance of colostomy to prevent distention of the colostomy. With a very large abdominal wall, it may also be difficult to mobilize enough colon without compromising blood supply to the colon." and "C. Panniculectomy may be considered medically necessary for chronic infections of the panniculus that have failed to heal despite medically supervised care at a wound center." ▪ Revised wording from "Panniculectomy is considered cosmetic as an adjunct..." to "Panniculectomy is considered not medically necessary as an adjunct..." ▪ Revised wording from "Repair of diastasis rectus alone is considered cosmetic for all indications." to "Repair of diastasis rectus alone is considered not medically necessary for all indications." <p>Added the Rationale section.</p>
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