

## Medical Policy



### Title: Panniculectomy and Abdominoplasty

<b>Professional / Institutional</b>
Original Effective Date: November 2000 / January 1, 2005
Last Review Date: July 8, 2025
Current Effective Date: March 7, 2011

**State and Federal mandates and health plan member contract language, including specific provisions/exclusions, take precedence over Medical Policy and must be considered first in determining eligibility for coverage. To verify a member's benefits, contact [Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Customer Service](#).**

**The BCBSKS Medical Policies contained herein are for informational purposes and apply only to members who have health insurance through BCBSKS or who are covered by a self-insured group plan administered by BCBSKS. Medical Policy for FEP members is subject to FEP medical policy which may differ from BCBSKS Medical Policy.**

**The medical policies do not constitute medical advice or medical care. Treating health care providers are independent contractors and are neither employees nor agents of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas and are solely responsible for diagnosis, treatment and medical advice.**

**If your patient is covered under a different Blue Cross and Blue Shield plan, please refer to the Medical Policies of that plan.**

### DESCRIPTION

Panniculectomy involves the removal of hanging excess skin/fat in a transverse or vertical wedge but does not include muscle plication, neoumbilicoplasty or flap elevation.

Abdominoplasty involves the removal of excess skin and fat from the pubis to the umbilicus or above, and may include fascial plication of the rectus muscle diastasis and a neoumbilicoplasty.

**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  $\leq 30$  kg/m<sup>2</sup> as well as the following:
    - a. The patient has maintained a stable weight for at least six months  
**AND**
    - b. 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 wounds of the panniculus that have failed to heal despite medically supervised care at a wound center.
- D. Panniculectomy may be considered **medically necessary** for refractory hidradenitis suppurativa despite optimal medical management which might include antibiotics, retinoids, and immunosuppression.
- E. 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.
- F. Panniculectomy for the treatment of back pain is considered **not medically necessary**.
- G. Repair of diastasis rectus alone is considered **not medically necessary** for all indications.
- H. Abdominoplasty, when done to remove excess skin or fat with or without tightening of the underlying muscles is considered **cosmetic, and therefore not covered**.
- I. Liposuction is considered **cosmetic, and therefore not covered**.
- J. 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**.

Note: 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.

**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.**

## **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* (2017) 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/m<sup>2</sup> to 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> 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. This may not be a comprehensive list of procedure codes applicable to this policy.**

**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.**

**The code(s) listed below are medically necessary ONLY if the procedure is performed according to the "Policy" section of this document.**

<b>CPT/HCPCS</b>	
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

<b>REVISIONS</b>	
10-19-2009	<p>Description section updated</p> <p>Policy section updated</p> <p>The previous policy language was:</p> <p>"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.</p> <p>Panniculectomy and abdominoplasty are considered medically necessary for the patient who meets all the following criteria:</p> <p>The panniculus hangs below the level of the pubis (which is documented in photographs); AND</p> <p>The patient has had significant weight loss of 100 pounds or more, as well as the following:</p> <p>The patient has maintained a stable weight for at least six months AND</p> <p>If the patient has had bariatric surgery, he/she is at least 18 months post operative; AND</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>There is no adequate evidence that pannus contributes to hernia formation or recurrence.</p> <p>The primary cause of hernia formation is an abdominal wall defect or weakness, not a pulling effect from a pannus.</p> <p>Panniculectomy or abdominoplasty for the treatment of back pain is considered not medically necessary.</p> <p>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 and is of no clinical significance. Documentation of a ventral hernia requires size of the</p>

<b>REVISIONS</b>	
	<p>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"> <li>▪ Revised wording from "...significant weight loss of 100 pounds or more..." to "...significant weight loss and reached a BMI <math>\leq</math> 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup>..."</li> <li>▪ 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."</li> <li>▪ Revised wording from "Panniculectomy is considered cosmetic as an adjunct..." to "Panniculectomy is considered not medically necessary as an adjunct..."</li> <li>▪ 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."</li> </ul>
	Rationale section added
03-07-2011	<p>In policy section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Added to C. "wounds and" to read "Panniculectomy may be considered medically necessary for chronic wounds and infections of the panniculus that have failed to heal despite medically supervised care at a wound center."</li> <li>▪ Added medically necessary indication item D. "Panniculectomy may be considered medically necessary for refractory hidradenitis suppurativa despite optimal medical management which might include antibiotics, retinoids, and immunosuppression."</li> </ul>
	Reference section updated
02-28-2014	Description section reviewed
	Rationale section reviewed
	In Coding section:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Remove CPT code: 00802</li> <li>▪ ICD-10 Diagnoses Codes added</li> </ul>
	References updated
04-28-2015	Description section, Policy section, and Rationale section reviewed with no updates.
	References updated
07-20-2016	Policy reviewed with no updates needed.
02-18-2019	Description section updated.
	Rationale section updated.
	References updated.
02-24-2021	Medical policy was reviewed without changes.
04-20-2022	Medical policy reviewed with no changes made
03-14-2023	<p>Updated Coding Section</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Removed ICD – 10 codes</li> </ul>

<b>REVISIONS</b>	
05-14-2024	Medical policy reviewed with no changes made
07-08-2025	Medical policy reviewed with no changes made

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