This Protocol considers this test or procedure investigational. If the physician feels this service is medically necessary, preauthorization is recommended.

The following Protocol contains medical necessity criteria that apply for this service. The criteria are also applicable to services provided in the local Medicare Advantage operating area for those members, unless separate Medicare Advantage criteria are indicated. If the criteria are not met, reimbursement will be denied and the patient cannot be billed. Please note that payment for covered services is subject to eligibility and the limitations noted in the patient’s contract at the time the services are rendered.

Description
Vertebral axial decompression is a type of lumbar traction that has been investigated as a technique to reduce intradiscal pressure and relieve low back pain associated with herniated lumbar discs or degenerative lumbar disc disease.

Summary of Evidence
Evidence for the efficacy of vertebral axial decompression on health outcomes is limited. Because a placebo effect may be expected with any treatment that has pain relief as the principal outcome, randomized trials with validated outcome measures are required. The only sham-controlled randomized trial published to date did not show a benefit of vertebral axial decompression compared with the control group. Therefore, treatment with vertebral axial decompression is considered investigational.

Policy
Vertebral axial decompression is considered investigational.

Background
Vertebral axial decompression is a type of lumbar traction in which a pelvic harness is worn by the patient. The specially equipped table on which the patient lies is slowly extended, and a distraction force is applied via the pelvic harness until the desired tension is reached, followed by a gradual decrease of the tension. The cyclic nature of the treatment allows the patient to withstand stronger distraction forces compared with static lumbar traction techniques. An individual session typically includes 15 cycles of tension, and 10 to 15 daily treatments may be administered. Devices include the VAX-D®, Decompression Reduction Stabilization (DRS®) System, Accu-SPINA® System, DRX-3000®, DRX9000®, SpineMED Decompression Table®, Antalgic-Trak®, Lordex® Traction Unit, and Triton® DTS.
Regulatory Status

Several devices used for vertebral axial decompression have received 510(k) marketing clearance from FDA. According to labeled indications from FDA, vertebral axial decompression may be used as a treatment modality for patients with incapacitating low back pain and for decompression of the intervertebral discs and facet joints. FDA product code: ITH.

Services that are the subject of a clinical trial do not meet our Technology Assessment Protocol criteria and are considered investigational. For explanation of experimental and investigational, please refer to the Technology Assessment Protocol.

It is expected that only appropriate and medically necessary services will be rendered. We reserve the right to conduct prepayment and postpayment reviews to assess the medical appropriateness of the above-referenced procedures. Some of this Protocol may not pertain to the patients you provide care to, as it may relate to products that are not available in your geographic area.

References

We are not responsible for the continuing viability of web site addresses that may be listed in any references below.


