



MEDICAL COVERAGE POLICY

SERVICE: Acupuncture

Policy Number: 001

Effective Date: 02/01/2025

Last Review: 01/13/2025

Next Review: 01/13/2026

Important note: Unless otherwise indicated, medical policies will apply to all lines of business.

Medical necessity as defined by this policy does not ensure the benefit is covered. This medical policy does not replace existing federal or state rules and regulations for the applicable service or supply. In the absence of a controlling federal or state coverage mandate, benefits are ultimately determined by the terms of the applicable benefit plan documents. See the member plan specific benefit plan document for a complete description of plan benefits, exclusions, limitations, and conditions of coverage. In the event of a discrepancy, the plan document always supersedes the information in this policy.

SERVICE: Acupuncture

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION: Not Required

POLICY: Please review the plan's EOC (Evidence of Coverage) or Summary Plan Description (SPD) for details. Acupuncture is a covered benefit for some plans. If it is a benefit, some plans place an annual limit on the number of encounters that will be covered. This policy defines the medical necessity criteria that will be used for non-Medicare acupuncture claims, when covered under the member's insurance plan.

Note: Unless otherwise indicated (see below), this policy will apply to all lines of business.

For Medicare plans, please refer to appropriate Medicare NCD (National Coverage Determination) or LCD (Local Coverage Determination). [NCD 30.3 Acupuncture](#), [NCD 30.3.3 Acupuncture for Chronic Lower Back Pain \(cLBP\)](#). Medicare NCD or LCD specific InterQual criteria may be used when available. If there are no applicable NCD or LCD criteria, use the criteria set forth below.

- A. For Medicare plans, acupuncture is ONLY covered for chronic low back pain. Medicare excludes all forms of acupuncture from CMS reimbursement EXCEPT for the treatment of chronic low back pain.
- B. For Medicare plans, dry needling for the treatment of chronic low back pain is a covered benefit when performed by an acupuncturist.

For Medicaid plans, please confirm coverage as outlined in the [Texas Medicaid Provider Procedures Manual | TMHP](#) (TMPPM). If there are no applicable criteria to guide medical necessity decision making in the TMPPM, use the criteria set forth below.

BSWHP may consider the use of acupuncture (with or without the application of electrical stimulation) medically necessary for the following conditions only when performed by a licensed acupuncturist, a physician with acupuncture training or a chiropractor with acupuncture training:

- A. Treatment of medication-induced nausea, post-operative nausea, nausea associated with chemotherapy or nausea associated with pregnancy.
- B. Treatment of chronic low back pain defined as:
 - 1. Lasting 12 or more weeks
 - 2. Nonspecific with no identifiable systemic cause (i.e., not associated with metastatic, inflammatory, infectious disease, etc.)



MEDICAL COVERAGE POLICY

SERVICE: Acupuncture

Policy Number: 001

Effective Date: 02/01/2025

Last Review: 01/13/2025

Next Review: 01/13/2026

- 3. Not associated with surgery or with pregnancy
- C. As an adjunct to standard conservative therapy for treatment of tension and migraine headache
- D. Treatment to reduce pain and decrease disability due to knee osteoarthritis

Any treatment plan involving the use of acupuncture should ultimately result in the following:

- A. A clinically meaningful reduction in the patient's pain level,
- B. An improvement in the targeted symptom/sign,
- C. A reduction in the use of medication or medical services, and/or,
- D. An improved ability to carry out their usual activities of daily living

The use of acupuncture beyond two to three (2-3) weeks without elimination or a significant clinically meaningful reduction in the patient symptom or pain levels, an improvement in the targeted symptom/sign, the reduction in use of medication or medical services and/or clinical signs of functional improvement may be considered not medically necessary.

BSWHP does NOT cover acupuncture and/or other types of acupuncture (laser acupuncture using low level laser therapy, acupuncture point injection, etc.) for any other indication, because they are considered experimental, investigational, or unproven.

BACKGROUND:

Acupuncture is a complementary or alternative medicine technique or approach to patient care that involves the insertion of fine, hair-thin metallic (filiform) needles through the skin at specific points on the body, with or without the application of electrical current (Percutaneous Electrical Neuromuscular Stimulation - PENS) in an attempt to relieve pain, tension or improve bodily function. Acupuncture is reported based on the 15-minute increments of personal (face-to-face) contact with the patient, not the duration of acupuncture needle(s) placement.

MANDATES: N/A

CODES:

Important note: Due to the wide range of applicable diagnosis codes and potential changes to codes, an inclusive list may not be presented, but the following codes may apply. Inclusion of a code in this section does not guarantee that it will be reimbursed, and patient must meet the criteria set forth in the policy language.

CPT Codes	97810 - Acupuncture, 1 or more needles; without electrical stimulation, initial 15 minutes of personal one-on-one contact with the patient 97811 - Acupuncture, 1 or more needles; without electrical stimulation, each additional 15 minutes of personal one-on-one contact with the patient, with insertion of needle(s) (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)
-----------	---



MEDICAL COVERAGE POLICY

SERVICE: Acupuncture

Policy Number: 001

Effective Date: 02/01/2025

Last Review: 01/13/2025

Next Review: 01/13/2026

For Medicare (Dry needling codes)	97813 - Acupuncture, 1 or more needles; with electrical stimulation, initial 15 minutes of personal one-on-one contact with the patient 97814 - Acupuncture, 1 or more needles; with electrical stimulation, each additional 15 minutes of personal one-on-one contact with the patient, with insertion of needle(s) (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)
HCPCS Codes	20560 - Needle insertion(s) without injection(s); 1 or 2 muscle(s) 20561 - Needle insertion(s) without injection(s); 3 or more muscles
ICD10 Codes	N/A
	<p>G43.011 - Migraine without aura, intractable, with status migrainosus</p> <p>G43.019 - Migraine without aura, intractable, without status migrainosus</p> <p>G43.111 - Migraine with aura, intractable, with status migrainosus</p> <p>G43.119 - Migraine with aura, intractable, without status migrainosus</p> <p>G43.411 - Hemiplegic migraine, intractable, with status migrainosus</p> <p>G43.419 - Hemiplegic migraine, intractable, without status migrainosus</p> <p>G43.511 - Persistent migraine aura without cerebral infarction, intractable, with status migrainosus</p> <p>G43.519 - Persistent migraine aura without cerebral infarction, intractable, without status migrainosus</p> <p>G43.711 - Chronic migraine without aura, intractable, with status migrainosus</p> <p>G43.719 - Chronic migraine without aura, intractable, without status migrainosus</p> <p>G43.A1 - Cyclical vomiting, in migraine, intractable</p> <p>G43.B1 - Ophthalmoplegic migraine, intractable</p> <p>G43.811 - Other migraine, intractable, with status migrainosus</p> <p>G43.819 - Other migraine, intractable, without status migrainosus</p> <p>G43.911 - Migraine, unspecified, intractable, with status migrainosus</p> <p>G43.919 - Migraine, unspecified, intractable, without status migrainosus</p> <p>G89.0 - Central pain syndrome</p> <p>G89.21 - Chronic pain due to trauma</p> <p>G89.29 - Other chronic pain</p> <p>G90.50 - Complex regional pain syndrome I, unspecified</p> <p>G90.59 - Complex regional pain syndrome I of other specified site</p> <p>O21.1 - Hyperemesis gravidarum</p> <p>M17.0 - Bilateral primary osteoarthritis of knee</p> <p>M17.9 - Osteoarthritis of knee, unspecified</p> <p>M54.5 - Low back pain</p> <p>M54.9 - Dorsalgia, unspecified</p>

POLICY HISTORY:

Status	Date	Action
New	8/1/2010	New policy
Reviewed	5/3/2012	Reviewed.
Reviewed	2/28/2013	Reviewed. References updated
Reviewed	2/20/2014	Reviewed.



MEDICAL COVERAGE POLICY

SERVICE: Acupuncture

Policy Number: 001

Effective Date: 02/01/2025

Last Review: 01/13/2025

Next Review: 01/13/2026

Reviewed	3/05/2015	No changes
Updated	12/17/2015	Removed PA requirement
Reviewed	03/17/2016	No changes
Reviewed	03/07/2017	Reviewed with no material change
Reviewed	01/25/2018	Altered indication list.
Reviewed	01/15/2019	No changes
Reviewed	02/27/2020	Minor additions to coverage statement. Added new Medicare coverage
Reviewed	02/25/2021	No material changes. Updated Medicare references
Reviewed	02/24/2022	Added coverage for dry needling by acupuncturist for Medicare members
Reviewed	02/23/2023	No changes
Reviewed	02/12/2024	Formatting changes and added hyperlinks to CMS and TMPPM resources, beginning and ending note sections updated to align with CMS requirements and business entity changes
Reviewed	01/13/2025	Added descriptions for codes in codes section. Updated references. Ending note section updated to align with business entity changes.

REFERENCES:

The following scientific references were utilized in the formulation of this medical policy. BSWHP will continue to review clinical evidence related to this policy and may modify it at a later date based upon the evolution of the published clinical evidence. Should additional scientific studies become available and they are not included in the list, please forward the reference(s) to BSWHP so the information can be reviewed by the Medical Coverage Policy Committee (MCPC) and the Quality Improvement Committee (QIC) to determine if a modification of the policy is in order.

1. Aigner N, Fialka C, Radda C, et al. Adjuvant laser acupuncture in the treatment of whiplash injuries: a prospective, randomized placebo-controlled trial. *Wien Klin Wochenschr.* 2006;118:9599.
2. Alecrim-Andrade J, Maciel-Junior J, Cladellas X, et al. Acupuncture in migraine prophylaxis: a randomized sham-controlled trial. *Cephalalgia.* 2006;26:520-529.
3. Alimi D, Rubino C, Pichard-Leandri E, Fermann-Brule S, Dubreuil-Lemaire ML, Hill C. Analgesic effect of auricular acupuncture for cancer pain: a randomized, blinded, controlled trial. *Journal of Clinical Oncology.* 21(22):4120-6, 2003 Nov 15.
4. Allen JJ, Schnyer RN, Chambers AS, et al. Acupuncture for depression: a randomized controlled trial. *J Clin Psychiatry.* 2006;67:1665-1673.
5. Al Rashoud AS, Abboud RJ, Wang W, et al. Efficacy of low-level laser therapy applied at acupuncture points in knee osteoarthritis: a randomised double-blind comparative trial. *Physiotherapy.* Sep 2014; 100(3):242-248. PMID 24418801
6. Andersson G, Lyttkens L. Acupuncture for tinnitus: time to stop? *Scand Audiol.* 1996;25:273-275.
7. Assefi NP, Sherman KJ, Jacobsen C, et al. A randomized clinical trial of acupuncture compared with sham acupuncture in fibromyalgia. *Ann Intern Med.* 2005;143:10-19.
8. Bier ID, Wilson J, Studt P, et al. Auricular acupuncture, education, and smoking cessation: a randomized, sham-controlled trial. *Am J Public Health.* 2002;92:1642-1647.
9. Blossfeldt P. Acupuncture for chronic neck pain - a cohort study in an NHS pain clinic. *Acupunct Med.* 2004 Sep;22(3):146-51.
10. Brinkhaus B, Witt CM, Jena S, Linde K, Streng A, Wagenpfeil S, Irnich D, Walther HU, Melchart D, Willich SN. Acupuncture in patients with chronic low back pain: a randomized controlled trial. *Arch Intern Med.* 2006 Feb 27;166(4):450-7.



MEDICAL COVERAGE POLICY

SERVICE: Acupuncture

Policy Number: 001

Effective Date: 02/01/2025

Last Review: 01/13/2025

Next Review: 01/13/2026

11. Cafaro A, Arduino PG, Gammbino A, et al. Effect of laser acupuncture on salivary flow rate in patients with Sjögren's syndrome. *Lasers Med Sci.* Aug 2015; 30(6):1805-1809. PMID 24820476
12. Capodice JL, Jin Z, Bemis DL, et al. A pilot study on acupuncture for lower urinary tract symptoms related to chronic prostatitis/chronic pelvic pain. *Chin Med.* 2007 Feb 6. [Epub ahead of print].
13. Colombo B, Annovazzi PO, Comi G. Medications for neuropathic pain: current trends. *Neurol Sci* 2006;27 Suppl 2:S183-9.
14. Cohen SM, Rousseau ME, Carey BL. Can acupuncture ease the symptoms of menopause? *Holist Nurs Pract.* 2003;17:295-299.
15. Cristian A, Katz M, Cutrone E, et al. Evaluation of acupuncture in the treatment of Parkinson's disease: A double-blind pilot study. *Mov Disord.* 2005 May 9.
16. Decision Memo for Acupuncture for Chronic Low Back Pain (CAG-00452N) January 21, 2020
17. Derry CJ, Derry S, McQuay HJ, et al. Systematic review of systematic reviews of acupuncture published 1996-2005. *Clin Med.* 2006;6:381-386.
18. Dibble SL, Luce J, Cooper BA, et al. Acupressure for chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting: a randomized clinical trial. *Oncol Nurs Forum.* 2007;34:813-820.
19. Ernst E. Acupuncture—a critical analysis. *J Intern Med.* 2006;259:125-37.
20. Engelhardt PF, Dahan LK, Zils T, et al. Acupuncture in the treatment of psychogenic erectile dysfunction: first results of a prospective randomized placebo-controlled study. *Int J Impot Res.* 2003;15:343-346.
21. Ezzo JM, Richardson MA, Vickers A, Allen C, Dibble SL, Issell BF, Lao L, Pearl M, Ramirez G, Roscoe JA, Shen J, Shivan JC, Streitberger K, Treish I, Zhang G. Acupuncture-point stimulation for chemotherapy-induced nausea or vomiting. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2006, Issue 2.
22. Facco E, Liguori A, Petti F, et al. Traditional acupuncture in migraine: a controlled, randomized study. *Headache.* 2007 Sep 14.
23. Feldman D, da Costa Sao Paulo ED. Treatment of fibromyalgia with acupuncture: a randomized, placebo controlled trial of 16 weeks duration. *Arthritis Rheum.* 2001;44(suppl 9):P119.
24. Flachskampf FA, Gallasch J, Gefeller O, et al. Randomized trial of acupuncture to lower blood pressure. *Circulation.* 2007 Jun 4.
25. Franca DL, Senna-Fernandez V, Cortez Cm, Jackson MN, Bernardo-Filho M, Buimaraes MA. Tension neck syndrome treated by acupuncture combined with physiotherapy: A comparative clinical (pilot study). *Complement Ther Med.* 2008 Oct;16(5):268-277.
26. Freire AO, Sugai GC, Chrispin FS, et al. Treatment of moderate obstructive sleep apnea syndrome with acupuncture: A randomised, placebo-controlled pilot trial. *Sleep Med.* 2006 Oct 3.
27. Furlan AD, van Tulder MW, Cherklin DC, et al. Acupuncture and dry needling for low back pain: an updated systematic review within the framework of the Cochrane Collaboration. *Spine* 2005;30:944-63.
28. Gan TJ, Jiao KR, Zenn M, Georgiade G. A randomized controlled comparison of electro-acupoint stimulation or ondansetron versus placebo for the prevention of postoperative nausea and vomiting. *Anesthesia & Analgesia.* 99(4):1070-5, table of contents, 2004 Oct.
29. Green S, Buchbinder R, Barnsley L, Hall S, White M, Smidt N, Assendelft W. Acupuncture for lateral elbow pain (Cochrane Review). *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2002;(1):CD003527.
30. Haake M, Müller HH, Schade-Brittinger C, Basler HD, Schäfer H, Maier C, Endres HG, Trampisch HJ, Molsberger A. German Acupuncture Trials (GERAC) for chronic low back pain: randomized, multicenter, blinded, parallel-group trial with 3 groups. *Arch Intern Med.* 2007 Sep 24;167(17):1892-8.
31. Hantoushzadeh S, Alhusseini N, Lebaschi AH. The effects of acupuncture during labour on nulliparous women: A randomised controlled trial. *Aust N Z J Obstet Gynaecol.* 2007;47:26-30.
32. Heazell A, Thorneycroft J, Walton V, et al. Acupressure for the in-patient treatment of nausea and vomiting in early pregnancy: a randomized control trial. *Am J Obstet Gynecol.* 2006;194:815-20.
33. Hollifield M, Sinclair-Lian N, Warner TD, et al. Acupuncture for post-traumatic stress disorder: a randomized controlled pilot trial. *J Nerv Ment Dis.* 2007;195:504-513.
34. Huang MI, Nir Y, Chen B, et al. A randomized controlled pilot study of acupuncture for postmenopausal hot flashes: effect on nocturnal hot flashes and sleep quality. *Fertil Steril.* 2006;86:700-710.
35. Huang R, Li X, Xu S, Li D, Yan P, Liu B, Xie X, Yang K. Acupoint injection treatment 34 for primary osteoporosis: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized 35 controlled trials. *Ann Palliat Med.* 2019 Nov;8(5):586-595
36. Itoh K, Hirota S, Katsumi Y, Ochi H, Kitakoji H. Trigger point acupuncture for treatment of knee osteoarthritis--a



MEDICAL COVERAGE POLICY

SERVICE: Acupuncture

Policy Number: 001

Effective Date: 02/01/2025

Last Review: 01/13/2025

Next Review: 01/13/2026

preliminary RCT for a pragmatic trial. *Acupuncture in Medicine*. 26(1):17-26, 2008 Mar.

37. Jena S, Witt C, Brinkhaus B, Wegscheider K, Willich S. Acupuncture in patients with headache. *Cephalalgia*. 2008 Jul 2.
38. Karst M, Winterhalter M, Munte S, et al. Auricular acupuncture for dental anxiety: a randomized controlled trial. *Anesth Analg*. 2007;104:295-300.
39. Kunz S, Schulz M, Lewitzky M, et al. Ear acupuncture for alcohol withdrawal in comparison with aromatherapy: a randomized-controlled trial. *Alcohol Clin Exp Res*. 2007;31:436-442.
40. Kwon YD, Pittler MH, Ernst E. Acupuncture for peripheral joint osteoarthritis: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Rheumatology (Oxford)*. 2006 Aug 27.
41. Lee MS, Shin BC, Ernst E. Acupuncture for rheumatoid arthritis: a systematic review. *Rheumatology (Oxford)*. 2008 Aug 18.
42. Lewith GT, Field J, Machin D. Acupuncture compared with placebo in post-herpetic pain. *Pain*. 1983;17:361-368.
43. Macklin EA, Wayne PM, Kalish LA, et al. Stop Hypertension With the Acupuncture Research Program (SHARP). Results of a randomized, controlled clinical trial. *Hypertension*. 2006 Oct 2. 35
44. Litscher G. Mechanisms of Laser Acupuncture – Hypotheses and Evidence. *OBM integrative and Complementary Medicine*. 2024. 9(2).
45. Martin DP, Sletten CD, Williams BA, Berger IH. Improvement in fibromyalgia symptoms with acupuncture: results of a randomized controlled trial. *Mayo Clin Proc* 2006;81(6):749-57.
46. Miller KE, Muth ER. Efficacy of acupressure and acustimulation bands for the prevention of motion sickness. *Aviat Space Environ Med*. 2004;75:227-234.
47. Shang YJ, Ma CC, Cai YY, Wang DS, Kong LL. Clinical study on acupuncture combined with rehabilitation therapy for treatment of poststroke shoulder-hand syndrome. *Zhongguo Zhen Jiu*. 2008 May;28(5)331-333.
48. Trinh K, Graham N, Gross A, Goldsmith C, Wang E, Cameron I, Kay T. Acupuncture for neck disorders. *Spine*. 32(2):236-43, 2007 Jan 15.
49. Usichenko TI, Kuchling S, Witstruck T, et al. Auricular acupuncture for pain relief after ambulatory knee surgery: a randomized trial. *CMAJ*. 2007;176:179-183.
50. Vickers AJ, Feinstein MB, Deng GE, et al. Acupuncture for dyspnea in advanced cancer: a randomized, placebo-controlled pilot trial. *BMC Palliat Care*. 2005 Aug 18.
51. Weidenhammer W, Linde K, Streng A, Hoppe A, Melchart D. Acupuncture for chronic low back pain in routine care: a multicenter observational study. *Clinical Journal of Pain*. 23(2):128-35, 2007 Feb.
52. White A, Hayhoe S, Hart A, et al. Adverse events following acupuncture: prospective survey of 32,000 consultations with doctors and physiotherapists. *BMJ*. 2001;323:485-486.
53. Xie G, Wang T, Tang X, Guo X, Xu Y, Deng L, Sun H, Ma Z, Ai Y, Jiang B, Li L, Luo W, Huang W, Xia Y, Zhao H, Wang X, Guo Y, Liao J. Acupoint Injection for 18 Nonspecific Chronic Low Back Pain: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of 19 Randomized Controlled Studies. *Evid Based Complement Alternat Med*. 2020 Oct 20 28;2020:3976068

Note:

Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) products are offered through Scott and White Health Plan dba Baylor Scott & White Health Plan, and Scott & White Care Plans dba Baylor Scott & White Care Plan. Insured PPO and EPO products are offered through Baylor Scott & White Insurance Company. Scott and White Health Plan dba Baylor Scott & White Health Plan serves as a third-party administrator for self-funded employer-sponsored plans. Baylor Scott & White Care Plan and Baylor Scott & White Insurance Company are wholly owned subsidiaries of Scott and White Health Plan. These companies are referred to collectively in this document as Baylor Scott & White Health Plan.

RightCare STAR Medicaid is offered through Scott and White Health Plan in the Central Texas Medicaid Rural Service Area (MRSA); FirstCare STAR is offered through SHA LLC dba FirstCare Health Plans (FirstCare) in the Lubbock and West MRSA; and FirstCare CHIP is offered through FirstCare in the Lubbock Service Area.