Virtual Colonoscopy/Computed Tomography Colonography

Policy Statement

Computed tomography colonography (CTC) may be considered medically necessary for one or more of the following:
- Conventional colonoscopy is indicated but there are contraindications (e.g. chronic anticoagulation, colonic stenosis or significant anesthesia risk (ASA III or greater)
- Preferred by the patient for colon cancer screening and meets standard screening criteria.

Except for the indications outlined in the policy statements above, CTC is considered investigational.

Policy Guidelines

Computed tomography colonography (CTC) outcomes described in the literature represent outcomes under ideal conditions. This generally involves a comprehensive colon cancer screening program that includes rapid access to optical colonoscopy when necessary and systematic follow-up and surveillance of patients who generally have a more complicated follow-up schedule than do patients undergoing optical colonoscopy. Therefore, to achieve outcomes described in the literature that are similar to optical colonoscopy, CTC needs to be offered as part of a comprehensive colon cancer screening program that optimizes follow-up of patients undergoing this procedure.

Coding

There are category I CPT codes for this procedure:
- 74261: Computed tomographic (CT) colonography, diagnostic, including image post processing; without contrast material
- 74262: Computed tomographic (CT) colonography, diagnostic, including image post processing; with contrast material(s) including non-contrast images, if performed
- 74263: Computed tomographic (CT) colonography, screening, including image post processing

Description

Computed tomography colonography (CTC), also known as virtual colonoscopy, is an imaging modality that has been investigated as an alternative to conventional endoscopic (“optical”) colonoscopy. It has been most widely studied as an alternative screening technique for colon cancer, and for the diagnosis of colorectal cancer (CRC) in people with related symptoms and for other colorectal conditions.

Related Policies

- N/A

Benefit Application

Benefit determinations should be based in all cases on the applicable contract language. To the extent there are any conflicts between these guidelines and the contract language, the contract language will control. 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.

Some state or federal mandates (e.g., Federal Employee Program [FEP]) prohibits plans from denying Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved technologies as investigational. In these instances, plans may have to consider the coverage eligibility of FDA-approved technologies on the basis of medical necessity alone.

**Regulatory Status**

Multiple computed tomography devices, including multiple CTC devices, have been cleared for marketing by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration through the 510(k) process. Food and Drug Administration product code: JAK.

**Rationale**

**Background**
Computed tomography colonography (CTC), also known as virtual colonoscopy, is an imaging modality that uses thin-section helical computed tomography to generate high-resolution, 2-dimensional axial images of the colon. Three-dimensional images, which resemble the endoluminal images obtained with conventional endoscopic colonoscopy, are then reconstructed offline. CTC has been investigated as an alternative to conventional endoscopic ("optical") colonoscopy. While CTC requires a full bowel preparation, similar to conventional colonoscopy, no sedation is required, and the examination is less time-consuming. However, the technique involves gas insufflation of the intestine, which may be uncomfortable to the patient, and training and credentialing of readers may be needed to achieve optimal performance.

**Indications**
Diseases of the colon and rectum for which CTC may be considered as a diagnostic or screening tool include colorectal cancer and precancerous conditions, diverticulosis and diverticulitis, and inflammatory bowel disease. The most widely studied use of CTC is as an alternative screening technique for colon cancer.

**Literature Review**
Evidence reviews assess whether a medical test is clinically useful. A useful test provides information to make a clinical management decision that improves the net health outcome. That is, the balance of benefits and harms is better when the test is used to manage the condition than when another test or no test is used to manage the condition.

The first step in assessing a medical test is to formulate the clinical context and purpose of the test. The test must be technically reliable, clinically valid, and clinically useful for that purpose. Evidence reviews assess the evidence on whether a test is clinically valid and clinically useful. Technical reliability is outside the scope of these reviews, and credible information on technical reliability is available from other sources.

**Colon Cancer Screening**

**Clinical Context and Test Purpose**
Diseases of the colon and rectum for which computed tomography colonography (CTC) may be considered as a diagnostic or screening tool include colorectal cancer (CRC) and precancerous conditions, diverticulosis and diverticulitis, and inflammatory bowel disease. The most widely studied use of CTC is as an alternative screening technique for colon cancer.

The purpose of CTC in patients who are asymptomatic and undergoing CRC screening to prevent morbidity by detecting early colon cancers and detecting and removing cancer precursors such as polyps. The detection of cancer and removal of polyps ultimately requires an
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optical colonoscopy. CTC is an imaging procedure that can identify cancers or polyps. The effectiveness and efficiency of CTC depend on its ability to identify cancer or polyps accurately so that all or most patients who have such lesions are appropriately referred for optical colonoscopy for diagnosis and treatment.

The question addressed in this evidence review is: Does the use of CTC improve the net health outcome in patients who are asymptomatic and undergoing CRC screening?

The following PICOs were used to select literature to inform this review.

**Patients**
The relevant population of interest are individuals who are asymptomatic and eligible for CRC screening.

**Interventions**
The test being considered is CTC. CTC is performed in an outpatient setting or in a hospital or an imaging facility. Results of CTC are assessed by a radiologist.

**Comparators**
The following tests are currently being used to make decisions about managing patients who are asymptomatic and undergoing CRC screening: optical colonoscopy, sigmoidoscopy, and fecal occult blood test (FOBT). The comparators are performed in an outpatient setting, hospital, or imaging facility.

**Outcomes**
The outcomes of interest are disease-specific morbidity and mortality. Beneficial outcomes relate to true-positive testing, which leads to the detection of disease that would be otherwise missed. Harmful outcomes result from false-negative testing, which may delay the diagnosis and management of CRC. Follow-up immediately after test results is of interest for CTC test accuracy and validity and test-related morbidity. Follow-up at one to five years is of interest for CRC outcomes for disease-specific mortality and morbidity.

**Study Selection Criteria**
For the evaluation of the clinical validity of the CTC test, studies that meet the following eligibility criteria were considered:
- Reported on the accuracy of the technology
- Included a suitable reference standard
- Patient clinical characteristics were described
- Patient selection criteria were described.

**Technically Reliable**
Assessment of technical reliability focuses on specific tests and operators and requires a review of unpublished and often proprietary information. Review of specific tests, operators, and unpublished data are outside the scope of this evidence review and alternative sources exist. This evidence review focuses on the clinical validity and clinical utility.

**Clinically Valid**
A test must detect the presence or absence of a condition, the risk of developing a condition in the future, or treatment response (beneficial or adverse).

**Systematic Reviews**
The diagnostic characteristics of CTC as a colon cancer screening test have been investigated in many studies in which patients referred for optical colonoscopy agreed first to undergo a CTC. Using a second-look unblinded colonoscopy aided by the results of the CTC as the reference standard, the diagnostic characteristics of CTC and the blinded colonoscopy can be
calculated and compared. The sensitivity of CTC is a function of the size of the polyp; sensitivity is poorer for smaller polyps.

Lin et al (2016) published a systematic review and meta-analysis of the literature on CRC screening, conducted for the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. Reviewers identified 9 prospective diagnostic accuracy studies on CTC (total n=6497 patients). Seven studies involved CTC with bowel preparation and two involved CTC without bowel preparation. Five studies, including both without bowel preparation, were rated by U.S. Preventive Services Task Force as good quality and the remaining four were considered fair quality. In 4 studies of CTC with bowel preparation, the sensitivity to detect adenomas 6 mm or larger ranged from 73% to 98% and the specificity ranged from 89% to 91%. The sensitivity of CTC to detect adenomas 10 mm or larger (7 studies) ranged from 67% to 94%, and the specificity ranged from 96% to 98%. Four (n=4821) of the 9 studies also provided data on colonoscopy. The sensitivity for adenomas 6 mm or larger ranged from 75% to 93% and the sensitivity to detect adenomas 10 mm and larger ranged from 89% to 98%.

In addition, the Lin et al (2016) systematic review evaluated evidence on harms and extracolonic findings associated with CTC. Eleven fair or good quality prospective studies (total n=10272 patients) suggested little or no risk of serious adverse events such as perforation. In contrast, reviewers estimated that, with optical colonoscopy, the risk of perforation was 4 in 10000 procedures (95% confidence interval [CI], 2 to 5 in 10000) and the risk of major bleeding was 8 in 10000 procedures (95% CI, 5 to 14 in 10000). Radiation exposure is a potential harm of CTC but many of the studies did not report the extent of radiation exposure. Using data from four studies, reviewers estimated that the radiation dose of a full-screening CTC examination was 4.5 to 7 mSv. However, in more recent studies (i.e., published between 2004 and 2008), the estimated radiation dose was lower, at 1 to 5 mSv. Among studies reporting this outcome, extracolonic findings occurred in 27% to 69% of CTC examinations. Approximately 1% to 11% underwent diagnostic evaluation, and 3% required treatment. Extracolonic cancers occurred in about 0.5% of individuals undergoing CTC examinations.

Martin-Lopez et al (2014) published a meta-analysis that included 9 studies of CRC screening. Studies conducted for the diagnosis of CRC or in elderly, high-risk, or symptomatic patients were excluded. The overall per-patient pooled sensitivity and specificity of CTC were 66.8% (95% CI, 62.7% to 70.8%) and 80.3% (95% CI, 77.7% to 82.8%), respectively. For colonoscopy, the pooled sensitivity was 92.5% (95% CI, 89.0% to 95%) and pooled specificity was 73.2% (95% CI, 67.7% to 78.1%). In the subgroup with larger lesions, the diagnostic accuracy of both approaches was less divergent. For lesions 10 mm or larger, CTC had a pooled sensitivity of 91.2% (95% CI, 86.5% to 94.6%) and a specificity of 87.3% (95% CI, 86.2% to 88.3%). The pooled sensitivity of colonoscopy for lesions 10 mm or larger was 92.9% (95% CI, 86.0% to 97.1%) and the specificity was 91.3% (95% CI, 89.9% to 92.5%).

**Randomized Controlled Trials**

Regge et al (2017) reported on a controlled trial in which 5412 individuals were randomized to CTC (n=2674) or flexible sigmoidoscopy (n=2738). The detection rate for advanced adenomas did not differ significantly between groups (p=0.52). Detection rates were 133 (5.1%) in the CTC group and 127 (4.7%) in the flexible sigmoidoscopy group. Ten CRCs were identified in the CTC group and nine in the flexible sigmoidoscopy group. No serious adverse events were reported. Other large RCTs have compared the diagnostic accuracy of CTC with a different method of CRC screening. In the IJspeert et al (2016) trial, 8844 individuals were invited to be screened, and 2258 (26%) agreed to participate. This included 982 (34%) of 2920 randomized to CTC and 1276 (22%) of 5924 randomized to standard colonoscopy. The analysis focused on the detection of high-risk sessile serrated polyps. Sessile serrated polyps were detected significantly more often in the colonoscopy examinations (n=55 [4.3%]) than in CTC examinations (n=6 [0.8%]). For the outcome of all sessile serrated polyps (high- and low-risk), significantly more were detected with the colonoscopy (n=83 [6.5%]) than with CTC (n=21 [2.1%]; p<0.001). Adverse events were not discussed.
Nonrandomized Trials
One of the largest studies of a screening population, the American College of Radiology Imaging Network trial, was published by Johnson et al (2008). Patients underwent CTC prior to standard colonoscopy. The study used 16- to 64-row detector computed tomography scanners, stool-tagging techniques, and minimum training standards for interpreters of the test. A total of 2600 individuals were enrolled, and data were available for 2531 (97%) of them. Trial results showed 90% sensitivity of CTC for polyps 10 mm or larger and 86% specificity; positive and negative predictive values were 23% and 99%, respectively. In a follow-up analysis of the American College of Radiology Imaging Network trial, Fidler et al (2014) demonstrated that CTC had similar sensitivity and specificity in the detection of nonpolypoid adenomas.

Clinically Useful
A test is clinically useful if the use of the results informs management decisions that improve the net health outcome of care. The net health outcome can be improved if patients receive correct therapy, or more effective therapy, or avoid unnecessary therapy, or avoid unnecessary testing.

Direct Evidence
Direct evidence of clinical utility is provided by studies that have compared health outcomes for patients managed with and without the test. Because these are intervention studies, the preferred evidence would be from RCTs.

No RCTs comparing outcomes for patients undergoing CTC screening with patients who did not undergo CTC screening were identified.

Chain of Evidence
Indirect evidence on clinical utility rests on clinical validity. If the evidence is insufficient to demonstrate test performance, no inferences can be made about clinical utility.

A chain of evidence involves evaluating: (1) evidence that CTC is accurate and (2) evidence that CTC identifies appropriate patients with CRC who would not otherwise be screened. The clinical validity of CTC for screening for CRC has been demonstrated in systematic reviews and meta-analysis studies as well as several large RCTs. While modeling studies have reported that optical colonoscopy is likely more beneficial than CTC, higher participation with CTC may ameliorate otherwise lower improvement in net health outcome compared with optical colonoscopy.

Compliance with recommendations for optical colonoscopy is suboptimal. As reported by Steele et al (2013), the screening rate is about 60% (in the prior 10 years) among people ages 50 to 75. CTC has been proposed as an alternative colorectal cancer screening technique that may improve patient compliance compared with optical colonoscopy. A literature survey of studies that attempted to determine whether the availability of CTC would improve population screening rates found survey studies, patient satisfaction studies, and focus group studies. It is unclear how such studies provide a sufficient base of evidence to demonstrate that population adherence to colorectal cancer screening would improve through CTC.

Stoop et al (2012) published an RCT that evaluated the impact of CTC on colon cancer screening rates. This trial was performed in the Netherlands, and members of the general population ages 50 to 75 years were randomized to an invitation for CTC or optical colonoscopy. The CTC protocol included a noncathartic preparation, consisting of an iodinated contrast agent given the day before the exam and 1.5 hours before the exam, in conjunction with a low fiber diet. The participation rate in the CTC group was 34% (982/2920) compared with a rate of 22% (1276/5924) in the optical colonoscopy group (p < 0.001). The diagnostic yield per patient of advanced polyps was higher in the optical colonoscopy group, at 8.7 of 100 participants compared with 6.1 of 100 participants for CTC (p = 0.02). However, the diagnostic
yield of advanced neoplasia per invitee was similar, at 2.1 of 100 invitees for CTC and 1.9 of 100 invitees for optical colonoscopy (p=0.56). The data would suggest that the increased participation rates with CTC offset the advantages of optical colonoscopy and that overall outcomes would likely be similar between strategies. It is not known whether the different preparation regimens affected participation rates.

Section Summary: Colon Cancer Screening
There is variability in the diagnostic accuracy of CTC in the literature; this is likely due to improvements in technical reliability over time. The most recent studies have reported that the diagnostic accuracy for CTC is high and in the same range as optical colonoscopy for polyps greater than 10 mm.

No long-term comparative studies have directly reported on outcomes of CTC vs optical colonoscopy. The determination of comparative outcomes of CTC and optical colonoscopy is complex, due to the differing patterns of follow-up associated with each strategy.

At least one well-conducted RCT indicated that CRC screening participation rates are improved with CTC in comparison with optical colonoscopy. The improved screening rate may offset, or even outweigh, any benefit of optical colonoscopy on outcomes. However, the available study used a noncathartic preparation, and it is not certain that similar screening rates would be achieved with a cathartic preparation.

Colon Cancer Diagnosis
Clinical Context and Test Purpose
The purpose of CTC in patients who have positive CRC screening or signs and symptoms of CRC is to identify disease.

CTC has not generally been employed as a test to identify the disease in persons with positive cancer screening tests or symptoms because compared with screening settings, the expected probability of disease is much higher. Findings on CTC require confirmation with colonoscopy; thus it would be inappropriate to use a noninvasive test if the probability of needing a confirmatory invasive test is high.

The question addressed in this evidence review is: Does the use of CTC improve the net health outcome in patients who have positive CRC screening tests or signs or symptoms of CRC?

The following PICOs were used to select literature to inform this review.

Patients
The relevant populations of interest are individuals with positive CRC screening tests or signs or symptoms of CRC.

Interventions
The test being considered is CTC. CTC is administered in an outpatient setting or in a hospital or an imaging facility. Results of CTC are assessed by a radiologist.

Comparators
The following tests are currently being used to make decisions about patients who have positive CRC screening or signs and symptoms of CRC: optical colonoscopy and standard care without a colonoscopy.

Outcomes
The outcomes of interest are disease-specific morbidity and mortality. Beneficial outcomes relate to true-positive testing, which leads to the detection of disease that would be otherwise missed. Harmful outcomes result from false-negative testing, which may delay the diagnosis and management of CRC. Follow-up immediately after test results is of interest for CTC test accuracy.
and validity, as well as treatment-related morbidity; follow-up at one to five years is of interest for CTC outcomes for disease-specific morbidity or mortality.

**Study Selection Criteria**
The principles followed to select methodologically credible studies for this section are outlined in the first indication above.

**Technically Reliable**
Assessment of technical reliability focuses on specific tests and operators and requires a review of unpublished and often proprietary information. Review of specific tests, operators, and unpublished data are outside the scope of this evidence review and alternative sources exist. This evidence review focuses on the clinical validity and clinical utility.

**Clinically Valid**
A test must detect the presence or absence of a condition, the risk of developing a condition in the future, or treatment response (beneficial or adverse).

**Systematic Reviews**
Several studies have evaluated the role of CTC in the diagnosis of CRC in patients with symptoms or positive findings on other screening modalities (e.g., FOBT). Plumb et al (2014) published a systematic review and meta-analysis of studies evaluating the performance of CTC for the diagnosis of colon cancer among subjects with positive FOBT. FOBT is a recommended screening technique for CRC; positive tests are typically followed by a colonoscopy. In this meta-analysis, reviewers included only studies that used CTC in the evaluation of patients who had had a positive FOBT and compared colonography results with a reference test, conventional colonoscopy, segmental unblinded colonoscopy, or surgery with subsequent histopathology. Five articles were analyzed, representing 4 studies with 622 patients. Pooled per-patient sensitivity and specificity for adenomas 6 mm or larger or CRC were 88.8% (95% CI, 83.6% to 92.5%) and 75.4% (95% CI, 58.6% to 86.8%), respectively. Reviewers commented that data were limited on CTC for patients with a positive FOBT (only 4 studies) and based on the available evidence, CTC has a reasonably high sensitivity for detecting adenomas 6 mm or larger (88.8%; 95% CI, 83.6% to 92.5%) but a relatively low specificity 75.4%; 95% CI, 58.6% to 86.8%).

**Retrospective Studies**
Simons et al (2013) evaluated the false-negative rate and sensitivity of CTC for CRC among patients who presented with symptoms of CRC. The authors included 1855 consecutive patients who underwent CTC at a single-center. These data were linked to a comprehensive population-based cancer registry to determine if patients were diagnosed with CRC in the two years after their CTC. Fifty-three patients were diagnosed with CRC, of whom 40 patients had suspected CRC, 5 diagnosed with large polyps that appeared malignant on histology, and 5 diagnosed with an indeterminate mass on CTC. Two patients who developed cancer had not been diagnosed on CTC, and one patient who developed cancer had had an incomplete colonography. The overall sensitivity of CTC was 94.3% (95% CI, 88% to 100%).

Also, Plumb et al (2014) published findings of a retrospective study comparing results from CTC with optical colonoscopy in patients evaluated at a single-center who were indicated for CRC diagnostic assessment because of a positive FOBT. This study was not included in the Plumb et al (2014) review (described above). Based on the institutional protocol, optical colonoscopy was preferred for individuals with positive FOBT; however, CTC was substituted if the subject was unable to complete colonoscopic bowel preparation safely, was too frail or immobile to undergo colonoscopy (although potentially fit for necessary treatment), had another contraindication to colonoscopy, or had an incomplete colonoscopy. The study analyzed 2731 FOBT-positive patients screened with CTC as their first screening test. Of these, 1027 (37.6%) had CRC or polyps suspected (95% CI, 33.8% to 41.4%), and 911 underwent confirmatory testing. One hundred twenty-four (4.5%) were found to have CRC and 533 (19.5%) were found to have polyps, for an overall CRC- or polyp-detection rate of 24.1% (95% CI, 21.5% to 24.1%). The positive
predictive value for CRC or polyps was 72.1% (95% CI, 66.6% to 77.6%). Colonoscopy data were available for 72817 FOBT-positive patients who underwent colonoscopy as an initial screening test, among whom 9.0% had CRC, and 50.6% had polyps. The authors attributed the difference in CRC and polyp rates between the groups to underlying differences in risk between those referred for CTC and potential biases in the interpretation of screening guidelines.

**Clinically Useful**

A test is clinically useful if the use of the results informs management decisions that improve the net health outcome of care. The net health outcome can be improved if patients receive correct therapy, or more effective therapy, or avoid unnecessary therapy, or avoid unnecessary testing.

**Direct Evidence**

Direct evidence of clinical utility is provided by studies that have compared health outcomes for patients managed with and without the test. Because these are intervention studies, the preferred evidence would be from RCTs.

Several studies have evaluated the role of CTC for patients with symptoms suggestive of CRC. Atkin et al (2013) reported on the results of an unblinded RCT comparing colonoscopy with CTC in the evaluation of patients who had symptoms suggestive of CRC. Given the challenges of conducting a trial that would be adequately powered to detect small differences between CTC and colonoscopy in CRC and large polypl detection, the authors used rates of the need for additional evaluation after CTC as a primary outcome, on the assumption that such rates would strongly affect the evaluation of the benefits of the procedure. The trial randomized patients ages 55 or older with symptoms suggestive of CRC in a 2:1 fashion to colonoscopy or CTC. Both colonoscopy and CTC procedures were conducted with full bowel preparation. The trial's primary outcome was the proportion of patients who had an additional colonic investigation, defined as any subsequent examination of the colon until diagnosis (usually histologic confirmation of cancer or polyp) or until a patient was referred back to his or her physician. Additional diagnostic evaluation of the colon was required in 160 (30.0%) of 533 of those assigned to CTC compared with 86 (8.2%) of 1047 of those assigned to colonoscopy (p < 0.001). The overall detection rate for CRC or large polyps did not differ between the groups (relative risk, 0.95; 95% CI, 0.70 to 1.27; p = 0.69).

**Chain of Evidence**

Indirect evidence on clinical utility rests on clinical validity. If the evidence is insufficient to demonstrate test performance, no inferences can be made about clinical utility.

Because the clinical validity of CTC for colon cancer diagnosis has not been established, a chain of evidence supporting the clinical utility of CTC for this population cannot be constructed.

**Section Summary: CTC for Colon Cancer Diagnosis**

There is a relatively small number of studies of CTC for diagnosing CRC in patients with a positive screening test or with symptoms of CRC. A systematic review of CTC studies in patients with a positive FOBT identified only four studies and found a reasonably high sensitivity for detecting adenomas 6 mm or larger but relatively low specificity. An RCT comparing CTC with colonoscopy in symptomatic patients found a significantly greater need for additional evaluation after CTC compared with colonoscopy. Because the prevalence of the disease is much higher in patients with positive screening tests or symptoms of CRC, going directly to colonoscopy is usually the preferred clinical strategy. Additional studies are needed to determine with certainty the diagnostic accuracy of CTC for diagnosis of CRC; however, for patients unable to undergo a colonoscopy, based on the available evidence, CTC may be a reasonable option.
Summary of Evidence
For individuals who are asymptomatic and undergoing CRC screening who receive CTC, the evidence includes systematic reviews with meta-analysis, randomized and nonrandomized controlled trials, and modeling studies. The relevant outcomes are overall survival, disease-specific survival, test accuracy and validity, and treatment-related morbidity. The available evidence supports the conclusion that the diagnostic accuracy of CTC is in the same range as optical colonoscopy, with a moderate-to-high sensitivity and a high specificity for the detection of larger polyps and CRC. As a result, screening with CTC may provide similar diagnostic results to screening using conventional optical colonoscopy. Most modeling studies have reported that the overall health outcome benefits of a strategy that uses optical colonoscopy likely exceed the benefits of a strategy using CTC. However, these analyses assume equal participation rates in screening between the strategies. Participation in screening may be higher with CTC than with optical colonoscopy, and this may ameliorate or offset any improved outcomes associated with optical colonoscopy. The evidence is sufficient to determine that the technology results in a meaningful improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have positive CRC screening tests or signs or symptoms of CRC who receive CTC, the evidence includes systematic reviews with meta-analysis, an RCT, and cohort studies. The relevant outcomes are overall survival, disease-specific survival, test accuracy and validity, and treatment-related morbidity. Using CTC on patients with the suspected disease might be an inefficient testing strategy because CTC findings need to be confirmed with conventional colonoscopy. There are a small number of studies on CTC for diagnosis of CRC in patients with a positive screening test or with symptoms of CRC, and thus the diagnostic accuracy cannot be determined with certainty. Studies of patients with a positive FOBT have suggested a reasonably high sensitivity for detection of adenomas 6 mm or larger but a relatively low specificity. There are fewer studies of patients with CRC symptoms; the RCT found that significantly more patients required additional evaluation after CTC than after conventional colonoscopy. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

Supplemental Information
Practice Guidelines and Position Statements
American College of Physicians
The American College of Physicians (2015) updated its guidelines for colorectal cancer (CRC) screening.20 The American College of Physicians recommends 1 of the following 4 strategies for adults aged 50-75 years:
- High-sensitivity fecal occult blood test or fecal immunochemical test every year.
- Sigmoidoscopy every five years.
- Combined high-sensitivity fecal occult blood test or fecal immunochemical test every three years plus sigmoidoscopy every five years.
- Optical colonoscopy every ten years.
The guidelines did not mention virtual colonoscopy or computed tomography colonography (CTC).

American Cancer Society et al
The ACS (2018) updated its guidelines on CRC screening (see Table 1).21 The ACS made the following recommendations on colon cancer screening:
- "The ACS recommends that adults aged 45 years and older with an average risk of colorectal cancer undergo regular screening with either a high-sensitivity stool-based test or a structural (visual) examination, depending on patient preference and test availability....The recommendation to begin screening at age 45 years is a qualified recommendation. The recommendation for regular screening in adults aged 50 years and older is a strong recommendation."
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CTC was listed as an option for CRC screening (see Table 1) and was acknowledged to have comparable sensitivity and specificity to a colonoscopy. Stated limitations associated with CTC included exposure to low-dose radiation as well as complications of full bowel preparation, including rare cases of bowel perforation. It remains unclear whether incidental detection of extracolonic findings during CTC provides net benefit or harm to patients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colorectal Cancer Screening Guidelines</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stool-based test</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fecal immunochemical test every 1 y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-sensitivity, guaiac-based fecal occult blood test every 1 y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multitarget stool DNA test every 3 y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural test</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colonoscopy every 10 y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer tomography colonography every 5 y</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Guidelines on Colorectal Cancer Screening Options

**American College of Gastroenterology**

The American College of Gastroenterology (2017) published recommendations of the U.S. Multi-Society Task Force of Colorectal Cancer made up of expert gastroenterologists from the American College of Gastroenterology, the American Gastroenterological Association, and the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. The panel recommended CRC screening beginning at age 50 with adjustments based on race and family history using a ranked-tiered CRC screening approach in Table 2. Considerations for recommending the tiered system of current CRC screening tests included performance, cost, patient acceptance, and the lack of randomized trial results that directly compare the effects of different tests on CRC incidence or mortality.

Table 2. Colorectal Cancer Screening Tier Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Tier 1 | • Colonoscopy every 10 y  
         |     • Annual fecal immunochemical test |
| Tier 2 | • Computed tomography colonography every 5 y  
         |     • Fecal immunochemical test-fecal DNA every 3 y  
         |     • Flexible sigmoidoscopy every 10 y (or every 5 y) |
| Tier 3 | • Capsule colonoscopy every 5 y |
| Available tests not currently recommended | • Septin 9 |

**American College of Radiology**

The American College of Radiology (2018) updated its 2014 appropriateness criteria on imaging tests for CRC screening. While CTC was not recommended for screening of patients at high-risk for CRC, it was appropriate for screening in the following populations:

- Average-risk individual, >50 years old
- Moderate-risk individual with a first-degree family history of cancer or adenoma
- Average-, moderate-, or high-risk individual with incomplete colonoscopy.

CTC was also appropriate for CRC detection in moderate-risk individuals, and in average-risk individuals after positive fecal screening tests (fecal occult blood test or fecal immunochemical test).

**U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommendations**

The USPSTF (2016) updated its recommendations on CRC screening. The recommendations included the following:

Adults 50 to 75 years old:
"The USPSTF recommends screening for colorectal cancer starting at age 50 years and continuing until age 75 years." (Grade A)

Adults 76 to 85 years old:

"The decision to screen for colorectal cancer in adults aged 76 to 85 years should be an individual one, taking into account the patient's overall health and prior screening history.

- Adults in this age group who have never been screened for colorectal cancer are more likely to benefit.
- Screening would be most appropriate among adults who 1) are healthy enough to undergo treatment if colorectal cancer is detected and 2) do not have comorbid conditions that would significantly limit their life expectancy." (Grade C)

In a section on clinical considerations, USPSTF stated that evidence on CTC is limited to studies on test characteristics and that CTC can result in incidental extracolonic findings. The USPSTF also noted indirect harms resulting from standard colonoscopy performed for positive CTC findings. The USPSTF (2016) recommendations did not include a specific statement on screening with CTC. The USPSTF is currently in the process of updating these recommendations.

Medicare National Coverage
The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (2009) published a noncovered national decision memo on CTC screening.26

Ongoing and Unpublished Clinical Trials
Some currently unpublished trials that might influence this review are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of Key Trials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NCT No.</th>
<th>Trial Name</th>
<th>Planned Enrollment</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unpublished</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NCT01651624</td>
<td>Comparison Between Faecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT), Computed Tomographic Colonography (CTC) With Computer Aided Diagnosis (CAD) and Colonoscopy as a Primary Screening Test for Colorectal Cancer</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>Nov 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NCT: national clinical trial.

References


**Documentation for Clinical Review**

Please provide the following documentation:
- History and physical and/or consultation notes including:
  - Anesthesiologist pre-operative assessment
  - Reason a conventional colonoscopy is not indicated

Post Service (in addition to the above, please include the following):
- Procedure report

**Coding**

This Policy relates only to the services or supplies described herein. Benefits may vary according to product design; therefore, contract language should be reviewed before applying the terms of the Policy. Inclusion or exclusion of codes does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement.

**MN/IE**
The following services may be considered medically necessary in certain instances and investigational in others. Services may be considered medically necessary when policy criteria are met. Services may be considered investigational when the policy criteria are not met or when the code describes application of a product in the position statement that is investigational.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPT®</td>
<td>74261</td>
<td>Computed tomographic (CT) colonography, diagnostic, including image post processing; without contrast material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>74262</td>
<td>Computed tomographic (CT) colonography, diagnostic, including image post processing; with contrast material(s) including non-contrast images, if performed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>74263</td>
<td>Computed tomographic (CT) colonography, screening, including image post processing</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCPCS</td>
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</table>

**Policy History**

This section provides a chronological history of the activities, updates and changes that have occurred with this Medical Policy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Date</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06/01/2003</td>
<td>BCBSA Medical Policy adoption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Definitions of Decision Determinations

**Medically Necessary**: Services that are Medically Necessary include only those which have been established as safe and effective, are furnished under generally accepted professional standards to treat illness, injury or medical condition, and which, as determined by Blue Shield, are: (a) consistent with Blue Shield medical policy; (b) consistent with the symptoms or diagnosis; (c) not furnished primarily for the convenience of the patient, the attending Physician or other provider; (d) furnished at the most appropriate level which can be provided safely and effectively to the patient; and (e) not more costly than an alternative service or sequence of services at least as likely to produce equivalent therapeutic or diagnostic results as to the diagnosis or treatment of the Member’s illness, injury, or disease.

**Investigational/Experimental**: A treatment, procedure, or drug is investigational when it has not been recognized as safe and effective for use in treating the particular condition in accordance with generally accepted professional medical standards. This includes services where approval by the federal or state governmental is required prior to use, but has not yet been granted.

**Split Evaluation**: Blue Shield of California/Blue Shield of California Life & Health Insurance Company (Blue Shield) policy review can result in a split evaluation, where a treatment, procedure, or drug will be considered to be investigational for certain indications or conditions, but will be deemed safe and effective for other indications or conditions, and therefore potentially medically necessary in those instances.

### Prior Authorization Requirements (as applicable to your plan)

Within five days before the actual date of service, the provider must confirm with Blue Shield that the member's health plan coverage is still in effect. Blue Shield reserves the right to revoke an authorization prior to services being rendered based on cancellation of the member's eligibility. Final determination of benefits will be made after review of the claim for limitations or exclusions.

Questions regarding the applicability of this policy should be directed to the Prior Authorization Department at (800) 541-6652, or the Transplant Case Management Department at (800) 637-2066 ext. 3507708 or visit the provider portal at www.blueshieldca.com/provider.

Disclaimer: This medical policy is a guide in evaluating the medical necessity of a particular service or treatment. Blue Shield of California may consider published peer-reviewed scientific literature, national guidelines, and local standards of practice in developing its medical policy. Federal and state law, as well as contract language, including definitions and specific contract provisions/exclusions, take precedence over medical policy and must be considered first in determining covered services. Member contracts may differ in their benefits. Blue Shield reserves the right to review and update policies as appropriate.