



Update and Information on recently Approved Tricare Covered Benefits

Lap-Band Surgery now covered

For those TRICARE beneficiaries whose weight poses serious health risks and are medically qualified, TRICARE now covers laparoscopic adjustable gastric banding, a form of bariatric surgery also commonly called Lap-Band surgery. For approval, the patient must meet the following criteria:

- 1) 100 pounds over ideal weight for height and bone structure and have one of the associated medical conditions: Diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure, cholecystitis, narcolepsy, Pickwickian syndrome (or other severe sleep/respiratory disease), hypothalamic disorders, or severe arthritis of the weight-bearing joints.
- OR
- 2) 200% or more of the ideal weight for height and bone structure and have failed previous non-surgical weight loss

Lap-Bands work by providing a circumferential restriction of the stomach wall, early fullness with small portions, and prolonged feelings of fullness. The band can be adjusted later without further surgery to increase the effect. Since there is no change in absorption, weight loss is slower than with conventional gastric bypass surgery. Patients who cannot change their eating behaviors or undertake an exercise program, however, will likely have much less weight loss success despite successful band placement.

Please remember that active duty members are not eligible for lap banding or any other bariatric surgery per DoD Instruction 6130.4.

Breast MRI for Annual Screening now covered

Breast Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) has recently been approved for screening women with a high risk of developing breast cancer. Early detection is crucial to identify and treat breast cancer and MRI screening is a superior tool to detect cancer in high risk patients.

The American Cancer Society has established clear guidelines defining “high risk” patient categories that physicians will use to determine who qualifies for this coverage. Some risk factors include age, family history, presence of a specific gene marker and a history of chest radiation as a child/young adult. These risk factors are outlined in more detail at: http://www.cancer.org/docroot/CRI/content/CRI_2_4_3X_Can_breast_cancer_be_found_early_5.asp

It is important to remember that Breast MRI is not indicated for all women. Regular self-examinations and mammograms as directed are still very important for early detection of breast cancer. Breast MRI must be performed by a trained specialist who is qualified to perform this procedure to guarantee the reliability of the results and will not be available at all medical facilities.

The effective date for coverage is March 1, 2007 for patients meeting the eligibility criteria. If you have previously received this screening on or after March 1, 2007 and had coverage denied, please resubmit your claim for reimbursement.

Maternal Ultrasound coverage

TRICARE has recently changed the maternity ultrasound policy, making ultrasound easier to obtain when medically necessary. Previous policy allowed a limited number of routine ultrasounds during pregnancy. This new policy now allows ultrasound testing when medically necessary regardless of the frequency or stage of pregnancy.

Doctors often recommend maternity ultrasounds at different times during pregnancy. Specific medical conditions for which TRICARE will cover an ultrasound include the following:

- Estimating gestational age
- Evaluating fetal growth
- Conducting a biophysical evaluation for fetal well-being
- Evaluating a suspected ectopic pregnancy
- Defining the cause of vaginal bleeding
- Diagnosing or evaluating multiple gestations
- Confirming cardiac activity
- Evaluating maternal pelvic masses or uterine abnormalities
- Evaluating suspected hydatidiform mole
- Evaluating the fetus's condition in late registrants for prenatal care

Tricare on Line is an excellent source of further information on the benefits described above and can be accessed by clicking on <https://www.tricareonline.com> - then click on My Health, agree to disclaimer, click "General Health", choose condition explorer, then click on "Continue to the Condition Explorer", scroll to far right hand side of page, in the search window type in "gastric lapband", "breast MRI" or "fetal ultrasound" in the Healthwise search box on the right hand side of the page for additional information on the topics covered in this newsletter.

As always, if you have questions or any feedback we welcome your emails and calls to our office. Contact us at TPHI@med.navy.mil or call DSN 643-2044/Comm 011-81-611-743-2044.

Sincerely,
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