

Diagnostic Testing

1. MCG Criteria Used

Clinical Criteria: MCG Care Guidelines, 30th Edition

- Abdominal/Pelvic CT Scan (MCG ORG: A-0013 AC, 30th Edition)
- Myelography, CT (MCG ORG: A-0031 AC, 30th Edition)
- Arthrography, MR (MCG ORG: A-0436 AC, 30th Edition)
- Esophageal Manometry (MCG ORG: A-0131 AC, 30th Edition)

Applicable CPT / HCPCS Codes:

CPT / HCPCS Code	Description
74150-74178	Computed tomography of the abdomen and pelvis, without contrast, with contrast, and combined studies
72240-72270	Myelography, radiologic supervision and interpretation, cervical, thoracic, lumbosacral, and total spine
62302-62305	Myelography injection procedure, including CT myelography of specified spinal regions
73040, 73085, 73115, 73525, 73580, 73615	MR and CT arthrography, radiologic supervision and interpretation for shoulder, elbow, wrist, hip, knee, and ankle
91010, 91013	Esophageal motility (manometric) study with interpretation, with or without stimulation or perfusion
91299	Unlisted diagnostic gastrointestinal procedure, when used for advanced esophageal function testing

2. Statement of Rationale

Akido Labs uses the criteria in MCG Care Guidelines (30th Edition) to supplement the general Medicare criteria regarding advanced diagnostic testing, including abdominal and pelvic computed tomography, CT myelography, MR arthrography, and esophageal manometry, where Medicare coverage criteria are not fully established or require additional clinical specificity. MCG criteria are used to ensure consistency in reviewing the conditions to be met for coverage of these diagnostic services and to determine when such services are medically necessary. Advanced diagnostic testing in the Medicare Advantage population carries the dual risk of underuse, leading to missed or delayed diagnosis, and overuse, exposing patients to ionizing radiation, contrast nephrotoxicity, invasive instrumentation, and incidental findings that prompt further unnecessary testing. Absent consistent, evidence-based selection criteria, there is material risk of both inappropriate denial of medically necessary studies and inappropriate approval of studies that are not indicated.

Potential Clinical Harms:

Abdominal/Pelvic CT: Inappropriate denial of abdominal or pelvic CT in a patient with suspected malignancy, abscess, bowel obstruction, or vascular emergency could delay diagnosis of a life-

threatening condition. Inappropriate approval of CT for low-yield indications exposes elderly patients to cumulative ionizing radiation and iodinated contrast, with attendant risk of contrast-induced nephropathy in those with reduced renal reserve.

CT Myelography: Inappropriate denial of CT myelography in a patient with suspected cerebrospinal fluid leak, spinal stenosis not characterized by MRI, or a contraindication to MRI could leave a treatable neurologic condition undiagnosed. Inappropriate approval subjects the patient to an invasive intrathecal contrast injection with risks of post-dural-puncture headache, infection, and bleeding.

MR Arthrography: Inappropriate denial of MR arthrography in a patient with suspected labral or intra-articular ligamentous injury could delay definitive diagnosis and appropriate surgical referral. Inappropriate approval exposes the patient to an unnecessary intra-articular injection and, in patients with renal impairment, to gadolinium-associated risk.

Esophageal Manometry: Inappropriate denial of esophageal manometry in a patient with dysphagia after mechanical obstruction has been excluded could leave a primary esophageal motility disorder such as achalasia undiagnosed. Inappropriate approval exposes the patient to unnecessary transnasal catheter placement.

Clinical Benefits:

Abdominal/Pelvic CT: MCG criteria specify validated indications for abdominal and pelvic CT drawn from radiology specialty society appropriateness criteria, including suspected malignancy or staging, intra-abdominal abscess, bowel obstruction, and guidance of percutaneous biopsy. By requiring a defined indication, these criteria directly mitigate the harm of delayed diagnosis identified above while preventing the cumulative radiation and contrast exposure that follow from low-yield imaging.

CT Myelography: MCG criteria reserve CT myelography for defined indications including suspected cerebrospinal fluid leak and spinal pathology inadequately characterized by or contraindicated for MRI. This evidence-based restriction directly counters the harm of leaving a treatable neurologic condition undiagnosed while preventing unnecessary intrathecal instrumentation.

MR Arthrography: MCG criteria apply specialty society appropriateness guidance to reserve MR arthrography for suspected intra-articular injuries where conventional MRI is insufficient, directly addressing both the harm of delayed surgical diagnosis and the harm of unnecessary intra-articular injection identified above.

Esophageal Manometry: MCG criteria require exclusion of mechanical obstruction before manometry and reserve the test for evaluation of suspected esophageal motility disorders, directly mitigating the harm of undiagnosed achalasia while preventing unnecessary catheter placement. The clinical benefits of using MCG Care Guidelines are highly likely to outweigh any clinical harms, including delayed or decreased access to services, because the criteria incorporate appropriateness thresholds drawn from current specialty society guidelines and are unlikely to lead to inappropriate denials.

3. Explanation of Supplementation

Basis for Use: Original Medicare clinical criteria are not fully established and require supplementation to ensure consistent medical necessity determinations for advanced diagnostic testing. While Medicare statutes establish the general 'reasonable and necessary' standard, they do not specify the clinical indications and thresholds (e.g., which clinical presentations warrant cross-sectional imaging, when invasive myelography is appropriate, when intra-articular contrast

is indicated, or when motility testing is warranted) required to distinguish indicated from nonindicated diagnostic studies.

Applicable Medicare References: Social Security Act Section 1862(a)(1): 'Reasonable and necessary' standard Code of Federal Regulations: 42 CFR 410.32 (diagnostic x-ray and other diagnostic tests; ordering and medical necessity) Medicare Benefit Policy Manual, Chapter 15: Covered Medical and Other Health Services (CMS IOM Publication 100-02) Medicare Program Integrity Manual, Chapter 6, Section 6.5 (CMS IOM Publication 100-08) Code of Federal Regulations: 42 CFR 419.22; 42 CFR 422.101 Medicare Coverage Database: <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/search.aspx> For these diagnostic services, no specific NCD or LCD fully establishes clinical indication thresholds; Original Medicare criteria are not fully established, requiring supplementation. Within the above statutes and regulations, MCG criteria assist in determining the appropriateness of cross-sectional abdominal and pelvic imaging based on defined clinical indications; the appropriateness of invasive CT myelography relative to noninvasive alternatives; the appropriateness of MR arthrography relative to conventional MRI; and the appropriateness of esophageal manometry after exclusion of mechanical obstruction. Use of these criteria helps ensure diagnostic services are not incorrectly denied when medically appropriate, nor incorrectly approved when not reasonable and necessary, and may decrease inappropriate denials by creating a consistent set of evidence-based review criteria.

4. Summary of Clinical Evidence

Note: The following evidence summary is derived directly from MCG Care Guidelines, 30th Edition (guidelines A-0013, A-0031, A-0436, and A-0131). The reference lists below are drawn from those respective MCG guidelines.

Background

Abdominal/Pelvic CT Scan (MCG ORG: A-0013 AC) Abdominal and pelvic CT is a cross-sectional imaging study used across a broad range of indications including evaluation and staging of malignancy, suspected intra-abdominal abscess or infection, bowel obstruction, vascular abnormalities such as abdominal aortic aneurysm, and anatomic guidance during percutaneous biopsy. Appropriate use is guided by specialty society appropriateness criteria that weigh diagnostic yield against radiation and contrast exposure.

Myelography, CT (MCG ORG: A-0031 AC) CT myelography is a minimally invasive procedure in which contrast material is injected into the thecal sac under fluoroscopic guidance, followed by CT imaging. It is indicated for suspected cerebrospinal fluid leak and for evaluation of spinal pathology when MRI is contraindicated or inadequate.

Arthrography, MR (MCG ORG: A-0436 AC) MR arthrography involves administration of gadolinium directly into a joint under image guidance to distend the joint capsule and visualize small complex intra-articular structures on MRI. It is reserved for suspected intra-articular injuries inadequately characterized by conventional MRI, and gadolinium-based contrast agents carry specific risk in patients with chronic kidney disease or acute kidney injury.

Esophageal Manometry (MCG ORG: A-0131 AC) Esophageal manometry is performed by placing a transnasal catheter with multiple pressure sensors along the esophageal lumen; high-resolution manometry provides a continuous topographic assessment of intraluminal pressure. It is indicated for evaluation of dysphagia after mechanical obstruction has been excluded and for assessment of suspected esophageal motility disorders.

Evidence Summary

Abdominal/Pelvic CT Scan (MCG ORG: A-0013 AC) This guideline (30th Edition) is supported by an extensive body of peer-reviewed literature and specialty society appropriateness criteria addressing the indications for cross-sectional abdominal and pelvic imaging across oncologic, infectious, vascular, and procedural-guidance contexts, supporting indication-based selection to maximize diagnostic yield while limiting radiation and contrast exposure.

Myelography, CT (MCG ORG: A-0031 AC) This guideline (30th Edition) is supported by peer-reviewed articles and specialty society guidance establishing CT myelography as the test of choice for suspected cerebrospinal fluid leak and as an alternative when MRI is contraindicated or nondiagnostic.

Arthrography, MR (MCG ORG: A-0436 AC) This guideline (30th Edition) is supported by peer-reviewed articles and specialty society white papers establishing the incremental diagnostic value of intra-articular contrast for labral and ligamentous injury relative to conventional MRI, while documenting the contrast-associated risks that justify selective use.

Esophageal Manometry (MCG ORG: A-0131 AC) This guideline (30th Edition) is supported by peer-reviewed articles and practice guidelines on the use of esophageal manometry, which establish exclusion of mechanical obstruction as a prerequisite and define the role of high-resolution manometry in diagnosing primary motility disorders such as achalasia.

Rationale (from MCG) Use of these MCG care guidelines helps the clinician identify patient-specific clinical factors that establish the medical necessity of advanced diagnostic testing. The evidence-based clinical criteria ensure patients receive the most appropriate diagnostic evaluation for their specific condition, reduce unnecessary risks including radiation and contrast exposure, and provide a standard that can reduce disparities in care. These guidelines supplement but do not replace, modify, or supersede existing Medicare regulations or applicable NCDs or LCDs.

Related CMS Coverage Guidance (as cited in MCG 30th Edition): Code of Federal Regulations (CFR): 42 CFR 410.32; 42 CFR 419.22; 42 CFR 422.101; CMS IOM Publication 100-02, Medicare Benefit Policy Manual, Chapter 15; CMS IOM Publication 100-08, Medicare Program Integrity Manual, Chapter 6, Section 6.5; Medicare Coverage Database: <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/search.aspx>

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5. Public Accessibility

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