1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish the criteria for the medically necessary use of contrast baths.

2. Definitions

Contrast baths is a modality designed to stimulate blood vessels and reduce pain and/or edema by submerging a distal extremity in alternating hot and cold baths. Direct one-on-one supervision is required for safety purposes and reported for each 15 minute time period.

3. Statement of Policy

3.1. The determination of medical necessity for the use of contrast baths is always made on a case-by-case basis.

3.2. Contrast baths are designed to stimulate blood vessels and reduce pain and/or edema which may be considered medically necessary when combined with therapeutic exercise or manual therapy for a patient who has reported pain or documented loss of mobility of the distal extremities.

3.3. Any treatment plan involving the use of contrast baths should ultimately result in a reduction in the patient's pain and/or an improved ability to carry out activities of daily living. The use of contrast baths beyond two to three (2-3) weeks without a clinically meaningful reduction in pain levels and clinical signs of functional improvement is considered not medically necessary.

4. References

4.1. Scientific:

The following scientific references were utilized in the formulation of this medical policy. Triad Healthcare, Inc. will continue to review clinical evidence surrounding contrast baths and may modify this policy 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 Triad Healthcare, Inc. so the information can be reviewed by the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) and the Medical Quality Improvement Committee (MQIC) to determine if a modification of the policy is in order.


4.2. Related Triad Medical Policies:

- TMMP 18 - Medical Necessity
- TMMP 10 - The Use of Physical Modalities and Therapeutic Procedures

5. Attachments

5.1. Provider Manual

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