This tool addresses common symptoms and symptom complexes. Imaging requests for patients with atypical symptoms or clinical presentations that are not specifically addressed will require physician review. Consultation with the referring physician, specialist and/or patient’s Primary Care Physician (PCP) may provide additional insight.

 REGIONAL SYMPATHTETIC BLOCKS

Version 18.0; Effective 07-15-2016

This version incorporates accepted revisions prior to 12/31/15
# CMM-209~Regional Sympathetic Blocks

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CMM-209.1 Definitions

Regional sympathetic blocks (Stellate Ganglion Blocks and Lumbar Sympathetic Blocks) refer to the injection of local anesthetic along the sympathetic ganglia of the anterolateral aspect of the spinal column under fluoroscopy to reduce sympathetic nervous system activity related to the affected limb.

Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) is defined by the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) as a variety of painful conditions following injury which appear regionally having a distal predominance of abnormal findings, exceeding in both magnitude and duration the expected clinical course of the inciting event and often resulting in significant impairment of motor function, and showing variable progression over time. In addition to injury, CRPS can also occur as a result of various medical disorders or illnesses. The diagnostic criteria for CRPS are as follows:

- Continuing pain that is disproportionate to any inciting event
- Must report at least one (1) of the symptoms in the following categories:
  - Sensory: reports of hyperesthesia
  - Vasomotor: reports of temperature asymmetry and/or skin color changes and/or skin color asymmetry
  - Sudomotor/edema: reports of edema and/or sweating changes and/or sweating asymmetry
  - Motor/trophic: reports of decreased range of motion and/or motor dysfunction (weakness, tremor, dystonia) and/or trophic changes (hair, nail, skin).
- Must display at least one (1) of the signs in the following categories:
  - Sensory: evidence of hyperalgesia (to pinprick) and/or allodynia (to light touch)
  - Vasomotor: evidence of temperature asymmetry and/or skin color changes and/or asymmetry
  - Sudomotor/edema: evidence of edema and/or sweating changes and/or sweating asymmetry
  - Motor/trophic: evidence of decreased range of motion and/or motor dysfunction (weakness, tremor, dystonia) and/or trophic changes (hair, nail, skin).
CMM-209.2 General Guidelines

Regional sympathetic blocks should be performed using fluoroscopy. Performance of regional sympathetic blocks without the use of fluoroscopic guidance is considered not medically necessary.

CMM-209.3 Indications and Non-Indications

✓ The performance of a diagnostic regional sympathetic block is considered medically necessary for complex regional pain syndrome. A positive response is considered when there is at least 50% reduction in pain and improvement in function for the duration of the local anesthetic used. If less than 50% improvement is noted for the duration of the local anesthetic, further blocks are considered not medically necessary.

✓ When performing repeat regional sympathetic blocks, a trial of up to three (3) additional blocks should be performed in the first two (2) weeks of treatment following the initial diagnostic injection. Continuation of the therapeutic blocks, up to a total of six (6) therapeutic blocks, should only be undertaken if there is evidence of pain reduction, decreased use of pain medication, increased functional abilities (including, but not limited to range of motion, strength, and use of the extremity in activities of daily living), or an increased tolerance to touch (decreased allodynia) during the rehabilitation program. Additional blocks should be performed at a one (1) time per week frequency.

✓ Based on the fact that there is insufficient evidence that regional sympathetic blocks (Stellate Ganglion Blocks and Lumbar Sympathetic Chain Blocks) as an isolated treatment alter the long term outcome of CRPS, all regional sympathetic blocks in recalcitrant cases of CRPS should be performed with the intent of facilitating involvement and advancement in an active rehabilitation/functional restoration program. A regional sympathetic block which is performed in an individual who is not capable or who is not actively involved in active rehabilitation program is considered not medically necessary.
This guideline relates to the CPT® code set below. Codes are displayed for informational purposes only. Any given code’s inclusion on this list does not necessarily indicate prior authorization is required.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CPT®</th>
<th>Code Description/Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>64510</td>
<td>Injection, anesthetic agent; stellate ganglion(cervical sympathetic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64520</td>
<td>Injection, anesthetic agent; lumbar or thoracic(paravertebral sympathetic)</td>
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This list may not be all inclusive and is not intended to be used for coding/billing purposes. The final determination of reimbursement for services is the decision of the health plan and is based on the individual’s policy or benefit entitlement structure as well as claims processing rules.

### CMM-209.5 References

   *Pain Pract.* 2006;6:34-38.
