

**Policy Name:** Pediatric Multidisciplinary Feeding Therapy

**Policy Number:** CMO 504

**Effective date of current policy:** 9/1/2018

### **Description and Scope**

This policy describes multidisciplinary pediatric feeding therapy and the indications for treatment..

### **Position Statement**

- I. Outpatient Pediatric Multidisciplinary Intensive Feeding Programs are considered medically necessary when ALL of the following criteria are met:
  - The individual has received a comprehensive history, physical and behavioral evaluation.
  - The individual has had adequate treatment for any contributing underlying medical conditions without resolution of the feeding problem. Documentation of specific interventions attempted by the interdisciplinary team that have not resulted in improvement over the course of at least a two month period.
  - A feeding disorder has been diagnosed in association with a medical, nutritional or behavioral problem.
  - The program will be provided by an interdisciplinary team that includes a behavioral health therapist, speech and language pathologist/therapist, occupational therapist, registered dietitian, clinical coordinator and supervising physician.
  - An individualized treatment plan is provided that defines short-term and long-term objectives with measurable metrics and which reflect meaningful improvement.
  - The treatment plan must include active participation of the child's parent or guardian.
  - A suboptimal score on nutritional assessment has been documented as indicated by any of the following:
    - a. A rate of weight gain that causes a decrease in two or more major percentile lines in weight for height or weight for length over time (e.g., from 75th to 25th); or
    - b. Weight loss or minimal weight gain over two months for children whose weight for height or weight for length is below the 5%.

Note: Regular documentation supporting significant progress toward treatment is required to determine the medical necessity of continuation of a pediatric intensive multidisciplinary feeding program.

- II. Inpatient Pediatric Multidisciplinary Intensive Feeding Programs are considered medically necessary when ALL of the following criteria are met:
  - The individual meets criteria for an outpatient pediatric intensive multi-disciplinary feeding program (listed above).
  - There is documented failure or contraindication for an outpatient intensive multi-disciplinary feeding program.

The individual is stable medically and is capable of participating in an inpatient multidisciplinary intensive feeding program.

- I. A Pediatric Multidisciplinary Intensive Feeding Program is considered not medically necessary for ANY of the following:
  - When the individual's condition is such that it would be medically appropriate to receive services in a less intensive setting (e.g., when a home feeding program can be utilized).

- Significant therapeutic improvement is not expected within two months.
- The therapy duplicates services that are already being provided as part of an authorized therapy program.
- Swallowing/feeding therapy for food aversions in members that are meeting normal growth milestones.
- When coordinated multidisciplinary care is not provided or not required.

## **Background**

Feeding disorders is a term that refers to a condition in which a child is unable or refuses to eat and/or drink sufficient quantities of food to support normal growth for the individual's age. This avoidant or restrictive food intake can result in significant organic, nutritional or emotional ramifications.

Signs or symptoms of potential organic problems include dysphagia (difficulty swallowing), odynophagia (painful swallowing), choking, coughing or wheezing. Additional issues, although less urgent, may include growth failure, diarrhea and vomiting.

Behavioral issues, including but not limited to developmental disabilities and autism spectrum disorder, are another major factor in treatment of feeding disorders.

A comprehensive interdisciplinary team will usually include a behavioral health therapist, speech and language pathologist/therapist, registered dietitian, occupational therapist, clinical coordinator and supervising physician.

## **Definitions**

An intensive feeding program is defined as a multidisciplinary approach to the assessment and management of complex swallowing and feeding disorders. These disorders are generally seen in younger children, unlike anorexia and bulimia which are commonly seen in adolescents and adults. However, some individuals up to the age of 18 may require the services of an intensive feeding program.

The individual must have failed an outpatient multidisciplinary intensive feeding program or is unable to participate in an outpatient program because of a medical contraindication.

## **Coding**

NOT APPLICABLE

## **References**

Peer Reviewed Publications:

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Government Agency, Medical Society, and Other Authoritative Publications:

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- CDC Growth Charts. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/growthcharts/>.

**Medical Policy Committee History and Revisions**

Date	Action
July 24, 2018	Initial approval by Medical Policy and Benefits Committee
June 25, 2019	Reworded sections for clarity Removed CPT codes.
May 26, 2020	Reworded sections for clarity.

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**Disclaimer**

Affinity Health Plan has developed medical policies that serve as one of the sets of guidelines for coverage decisions. Benefit plans vary in coverage and some plans may not provide coverage for certain services discussed in the medical policies. Coverage decisions are subject to all terms and conditions of the applicable benefit plan, including specific exclusions and limitations, and to applicable state and/or federal law. Medical policy does not constitute plan authorization, nor is it an explanation of benefits. The policies are not medical advice. Affinity Health Plan reserves the right to change medical policies.