



BlueShield
of Northeastern New York

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Protocol

Debridement of Mycotic Nails

Effective January 1, 2006

Contracts Affected:
All Community Blue HMO
Senior Blue/Medicare PPO
Traditional Blue

*The following protocol contains medical necessity criteria for Debridement of Mycotic Nails services rendered on or after January 1, 2006 for BlueShield of Northeastern New York (BlueShield) contracts. If these criteria are not met, reimbursement will be denied and the patient cannot be billed. **Prior approval is not required.** Please note that payment for covered services is subject to the limitations noted in the above-referenced contracts and the patient's eligibility at the time the services are rendered.*

Description

Fungal disease of the toenails is a comparatively benign condition, but difficult to eradicate due to a high recurrence rate. A superficial variety of fungal infections produce little or no symptomatology beyond white opacities on the nails. However, deep infections may result in dystrophic nails, with subsequent pain and/or limitation of ambulation, and/or secondary infection. The definitive treatment may involve a short-term use of oral agents and/or periodic debridement of the dystrophic fungal nails with thinning of the nail plates (manual or electric).

Debridement of nails is a temporary reduction in the size or girth of an abnormal nail plate, short of avulsion. It is performed most commonly without anesthesia to accomplish any or all of the following objectives:

1. Relief of pain;
2. Treatment of infection (bacterial, fungal, and viral);
3. Temporary removal of an anatomic deformity such as onychia (thickened nail), or certain types of onychocryptosis (ingrown nail);
4. Exposure of subungual conditions for the purpose of treatment as well as diagnosis (biopsy, culture, etc.); and
5. As a prophylactic measure to prevent further problems, such as a subungual ulceration in an insensate patient with onychia.

Debridement of mycotic nails is considered to be routine foot care.

Corporate Medical Guideline

In the absence of a systemic condition, debridement of a mycotic nail is considered **medically appropriate** when the following criteria are met:

- In the case of ambulatory patients there exists:
 - a. Clinical evidence of mycosis of the toenail, and
 - b. Marked limitation of ambulation, pain, and/or secondary infection resulting from the thickening and dystrophy of the infected toenail plate.
- In the case of non-ambulatory patients there exists:
 - a. Clinical evidence of mycosis of the toenail), and

- b. The patient suffers from pain and/or secondary infection resulting from the thickening and dystrophy of the infected toenail plate.

Debridement of mycotic nail services are considered **medically appropriate** once in 60 days. More frequent services would be **not medically appropriate**.

Prior approval is not required. BlueShield fully expects that only appropriate and medically necessary services will be rendered. BlueShield reserves the right to conduct prepayment and postpayment reviews to assess the medical appropriateness of the above-referenced procedures.

Reference

1. UMD LCD L3799, Debridement of Mycotic Nails, 3/31/2005.

Last Review Date

Reviewed with literature search/September 2007

Next Review Date

Review with literature search/September 2008