

PROVIDER Update



Alternative Treatments for Low Back Pain

Health Net Community Solutions, Inc. (Health Net) is committed to supporting providers and hospitals in their efforts to provide alternative noninvasive treatment to patients with low back pain.

Recent research and multiple studies present evidence and clinical recommendations regarding safe and effective alternatives to treat low back pain. Health Net encourages providers to include alternative treatment modalities, as appropriate, in treatment plans.

ALTERNATIVE TREATMENT MODALITIES

Alternative treatment modalities, such as the following, may reduce pain for patients and can be offered prior to recommending and referring patients for surgery.

- Physical therapy
- Pain management
- Acupuncture
- Chiropractic services
- Behavioral health services
- Mindfulness-based stress reduction techniques

RESOURCES

Providers can refer to the attached flyer for further information and additional resources regarding the alternative treatments mentioned above. Also included is information about reference literature available online.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Providers are encouraged to access Health Net's provider portal online at provider.healthnet.com for real-time information, including eligibility verification, claims status, prior authorization status, plan summaries, and more.

If you have questions regarding the information contained in this update, contact Yonnie Chen, Senior Project Manager, at (818) 676-7028, Dr. Anil Chawla, Medical Director, at (818) 416-2133, or the Health Net Provider Services Center by email at provider_services@healthnet.com within 60 days, by telephone or through the Health Net provider website as listed in the right-hand column.

THIS UPDATE APPLIES TO

CAL MEDICCONNECT PROVIDERS:

- Physicians
- Participating Physician Groups
- Hospitals
- Ancillary Providers

PROVIDER SERVICES

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Alternative Treatments *for Low Back Pain*

Health Net Community Solutions, Inc. (Health Net) is committed to supporting providers and hospitals in their efforts to provide alternative noninvasive treatment to patients with low back pain.

Recent research and multiple studies present evidence and clinical recommendations regarding safe and effective alternatives to treat low back pain, including the following modalities (*these modalities may reduce pain for the patient and can be tried prior to recommending surgery*):

- 1. Physical therapy** – Physical therapy may be a helpful first-line treatment for patients seeking pain relief.
- 2. Pain management** – Discuss treatment options for pain management with your patient.
- 3. Acupuncture** – Alternative treatments like acupuncture may relieve pain.
- 4. Chiropractic services** – Consider chiropractic services as an alternative treatment.



- 5. Behavioral health** – Most chronic pain patients have depression due to pain. As such, providers can recommend patients seek behavioral health therapy to cope with pain.
- 6. Mindfulness-based stress reduction techniques** – Techniques such as meditation and yoga may help joint mobility and reduce stiffness in joints, thus reducing pain.

Significant considerations

- Conservative management produces equivalent results compared to surgery.
- Surgery has side effects, and symptom resolution is in the range of 50%.
- As per recent published studies, surgery should be the last resort.
- We recommend that all conservative and alternative therapies be tried prior to referring patient for orthopedic surgery.

(continued)

Additional resources

- Smart Care of California: “Focus Area: Low Back Pain.” www.iha.org/our-work/insights/smart-care-california/focus-area-low-back-pain
- [Report] Cognitive and Mind-Body Therapies for Chronic Low Back and Neck Pain: Effectiveness and Value. November 6, 2017. <https://icer-review.org/material/back-and-neck-pain-final-report/>
- [Article] Noninvasive Treatments for Acute, Subacute, and Chronic Low Back Pain: A Clinical Practice Guideline from the American College of Physicians. April 4, 2017. <http://annals.org/aim/article/2603228/noninvasive-treatments-acute-subacute-chronic-low-back-pain-clinical-practice>

For further information

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Geoffrey Gomez,
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*We collaborate with
you to get members the
care they need.*