Medical Policy:  
Chemical Peels (Commercial)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY NUMBER</th>
<th>EFFECTIVE DATE</th>
<th>APPROVED BY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MG.MM.ME.54C4</td>
<td>01/01/2020</td>
<td>MPC (Medical Policy Committee)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT THIS MEDICAL POLICY:**

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**Definitions**

| Actinic keratosis (AK) | Actinic keratoses (AKs or solar keratoses) are keratotic macules, papules, or plaques resulting from the intraepidermal proliferation of atypical keratinocytes in response to prolonged exposure to ultraviolet radiation. Although most AKs do not progress to squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), AKs are a concern because the majority of cutaneous SCCs arise from pre-existing AKs, and AKs that will progress to SCC cannot be distinguished from AKs that will spontaneously resolve or persist. |
## Chemical peel

Controlled removal of varying layers of the skin with use of caustic chemical agents; resulting in a thinner, more compact stratum corneum, thicker epidermis, and uniform distribution of melanin. Peels are typically categorized according to depth and agent used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Agents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very superficial</td>
<td>Glycolic acid, 30-50 percent applied for 1-2 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(see Limitations/Exclusions)</td>
<td>Jessner (resorcinol, salicylic acid, lactic acid, ethanol) solution applied in 1-3 coats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low concentration resorcinol, 20-30 percent applied for 5-10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TCA (trichloroacetic acid) 10 percent applied in 1 coat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superficial</td>
<td>Glycolic acid, 50-70 percent, applied for 2-5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(See Limitations/Exclusions)</td>
<td>Pyruvic acid, 40-50 percent applied for 3-5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jessner solution applied in 4-10 coats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resorcinol, 40-50 percent applied for 30-60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TCA, 10-30 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Glycolic acid 70 percent applied for 3-15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pyruvic acid 60 percent applied for 3-5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TCA, 35-50 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Augmented TCA (carbon dioxide and TCA 35 percent; Jessner solution and TCA 35 percent; glycolic acid 70 percent and TCA 35 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep</td>
<td>Phenol 88 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baker-Gordon phenol formula (88 percent phenol, distilled water, septisol, croton oil)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


## Coding Criteria

To access the codes, please download the policy to your computer, and click on the paperclip icon within the policy.

## Applicable CPT and Diagnosis Codes

### Guideline

Medium or deep chemical peels are considered medically necessary for > 10 actinic keratoses (or other premalignant skin lesions) due to the impracticality of treating large numbers of lesions individually.
Limitation/Exclusion

1. Chemical peels are not considered medically necessary for the treatment of active acne vulgaris due to insufficient evidence of therapeutic value.

2. Chemical peels are not considered medically necessary when for the following cosmetic purposes (list not all-inclusive):
   a. Acne scarring (case-by-case review when documentation substantiating medical necessity is submitted to the plan)
   b. Contouring/discoloration/hyperpigmentation (e.g., dermatosis papulosa nigra, rosacea)
   c. Dull complexity
   d. Ephelides (freckles)
   e. Fine/fewer lines and wrinkles
   f. Lentigines (liver spots; aka age spots)
   g. Melasma
   h. Photoaged skin
   i. Sebaceous hyperplasia (aka senile hyperplasia)
   j. Seborrheic keratoses
   k. Skin roughness

References


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Specialty matched clinical peer review.


**Revision history**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>REVISION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01/01/2020</td>
<td>New policy. Connecticare has adopted the clinical criteria of its parent corporation, Emblem Health.</td>
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