

Functional Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation

Policy # 00042

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Applies to all products administered or underwritten by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana and its subsidiary, HMO Louisiana, Inc. (collectively referred to as the "Company"), unless otherwise provided in the applicable contract. Medical technology is constantly evolving, and we reserve the right to review and update Medical Policy periodically.

Investigational or experimental services are not covered. This includes any drug, device, procedure, or service provided under the investigational arm of a clinical trial or clinical study. These services are excluded from coverage under benefits.

Note: Powered Exoskeleton for Ambulation in Patients With Lower-Limb Disabilities is addressed separately in medical policy 00673.

Note: Myoelectric Prosthetic and Orthotic Components for the Upper Limb is addressed separately in medical policy 00443.

Note: Microprocessor-Controlled Prostheses for the Lower Limb is addressed separately in medical policy 00426.

Note: Sacral Nerve Neuromodulation/Stimulation is addressed separately in medical policy 00108.

Services Are Considered Investigational

Coverage is not available for investigational medical treatments or procedures, drugs, devices or biological products.

Based on review of available data, the Company considers neuromuscular stimulation as a technique to restore function following nerve damage or nerve injury to be **investigational*** in **all** situations, including but not limited to:

- To provide upper extremity function in individuals with nerve damage (e.g., spinal cord injury or post-stroke); **OR**
- To improve ambulation in individuals with foot drop caused by congenital disorders (e.g. cerebral palsy) or nerve damage (e.g., post stroke, or in those with multiple sclerosis [MS]); **OR**
- As a technique to provide ambulation in individuals with spinal cord injury.

Based on review of available data, the Company considers functional electrical stimulation (FES) devices for exercise in individuals with spinal cord injury to be **investigational.***

Policy # 00042

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Background/Overview

Functional Electrical Stimulation

There are 2 broad categories of neuromuscular electrical stimulation (NMES) devices: one targets muscle atrophy during rest, and the other enhances functional activity in neurologically impaired patients. These devices use electrical impulses to activate weak or paralyzed muscles in precise sequences. The technology often referred to as functional electrical stimulation (FES) is used for both upper and lower extremity rehabilitation, with a specific focus on enhancing mobility and independence. Functional electrical stimulation is an approach to rehabilitation that applies low-level electrical current to stimulate functional movements in muscles affected by nerve damage and focuses on the restoration of useful movements, like standing, stepping, pedaling for exercise, reaching, or grasping.

Functional electrical stimulation devices consist of an orthotic and a microprocessor-based electronic stimulator with 1 or more channels for delivery of individual pulses through surface or implanted electrodes connected to the neuromuscular system. Microprocessor programs activate the channels sequentially or in unison to stimulate peripheral nerves and trigger muscle contractions to produce functionally useful movements that allow patients to sit, stand, walk, cycle, or grasp. Functional neuromuscular stimulators are closed-loop systems that provide feedback information on muscle force and joint position, thus allowing constant modification of stimulation parameters, which are required for complex activities (eg, walking). These systems are contrasted with open-loop systems, which are used for simple tasks (eg, muscle strengthening alone); healthy individuals with intact neural control benefit the most from this technology.

Applications, described in more detail in the Rationale section, include upper-extremity grasping function after spinal cord injury (SCI) and stroke; lifting the front of the foot during ambulation in individuals with foot drop; and ambulation and exercise for patients with SCI. Functional electrical stimulation devices vary in size and design based on the treatment area and goals. These devices typically include a neuromuscular electrical stimulator unit, wires or wireless connectors, and electrodes, which may attach to the skin, be inserted under the skin, or be inputted through surgery to target specific muscles or nerves. Some devices are used primarily for rehabilitation rather than home use. This evidence review focuses on devices intended for home use.

FDA or Other Governmental Regulatory Approval

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

A variety of FES devices have been cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and are available for home use. Table 1 provides examples of devices designed to improve hand and foot function as well as cycle ergometers for home exercise. The date of the FDA clearance is for the first 510(k) clearance identified for a marketed device. Many devices have additional FDA clearances as the technology evolved, each in turn listing the most recent device as the predicate.

Functional Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation

Policy # 00042

Original Effective Date: 05/12/2003

Current Effective Date: 08/01/2026

Table 1. Functional Electrical Stimulation Devices Cleared by the FDA

Device	Manufacturer	Device Type	Clearance	Date	Product Code
NESS H200 ^{®†} (previously Handmaster)	Bioness	Hand stimulator	K022776	2001	GZI
MyndMove System	MyndTec	Hand stimulator	K170564	2017	GZI/IPF
ReGrasp	Rehabtronics	Hand stimulator	K153163	2016	GZI/IPF
WalkAide ^{®†} System	Innovative Neurotronics (formerly NeuroMotion)	Foot drop stimulator	K052329	2005	GZI
ODFS ^{®†} (Odstock Dropped Foot Stimulator)	Odstock Medical	Foot drop stimulator	K050991	2005	GZI
ODFS ^{®†} Pace XL	Odstock Medical	Foot drop stimulator	K171396	2018	GZI/IPF
L300 Go	Bioness	Foot drop stimulator	K190285	2019	GZI/IPF
L100 Go	Bioness	Foot drop stimulator	K200262	2020	GZI/IPF
Foot Drop System	SHENZHEN XFT Medical	Foot drop stimulator	K162718	2017	GZI
Nerve And Muscle Stimulator	SHENZHEN XFT Medical	Foot drop stimulator	K193276	2020	GZI
MyGait ^{®†} Stimulation System	Otto Bock HealthCare	Foot drop stimulator	K141812	2015	GZI
MStim Drop Model LGT-233	Guangzhou Longest Science & Technology	Foot drop stimulator	K202110	2021	GZI/IPF
ERGYS (TTI Rehabilitation Gym)	Therapeutic Alliances	Leg cycle ergometer	K841112	1984	IPF
RT300	Restorative Therapies, Inc (RTI)	Cycle ergometer	K050036	2005	GZI
Myocycle Home	Myolyn	Cycle ergometer	K170132	2017	GZI

Functional Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation

Policy # 00042

Original Effective Date: 05/12/2003

Current Effective Date: 08/01/2026

Cionic Neural Sleeve NS-100	Cionic	Foot drop stimulator	K221823	2022	GZI/IPF
EvoWalk 1.0	Evolution Devices Inc	Foot drop stimulator	K230997	2023	GZI
Neuvotion NeuStim NN-01	Neuvotion Inc	Hand stimulator	K240632	2024	GZI/IPF

FDA: U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

To date, the Parastep^{®†} Ambulation System (Sigmedics) is the only noninvasive functional walking neuromuscular stimulation device to receive premarket approval from the FDA. The Parastep device is approved to “enable appropriately selected skeletally mature spinal cord injured patients (level C6 to T12) to stand and attain limited ambulation and/or take steps, with assistance if required, following a prescribed period of physical therapy training in conjunction with rehabilitation management of spinal cord injury.” FDA product code: MKD.

Rationale/Source

This medical policy was developed through consideration of peer-reviewed medical literature generally recognized by the relevant medical community, U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval status, nationally accepted standards of medical practice and accepted standards of medical practice in this community, technology evaluation centers, reference to regulations, other plan medical policies, and accredited national guidelines.

Functional electrical stimulation (FES) involves the use of an orthotic device or exercise equipment with microprocessor-controlled electrical muscular stimulation. These devices are being developed to restore function and improve health in individuals with damaged or destroyed nerve pathways (eg, spinal cord injury [SCI], stroke, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy).

Summary of Evidence

For individuals who have loss of hand and upper-extremity function due to spinal cord injury (SCI) or stroke who receive functional electrical stimulation (FES), the evidence includes a Cochrane review of small studies, a few small case series, and a randomized controlled trial (RCT). Relevant outcomes are functional outcomes and quality of life. Interpretation of the evidence is limited by the low number of patients studied and lack of data demonstrating the utility of FES outside the investigational setting. It is uncertain whether FES can restore some upper-extremity function or improve the quality of life. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have chronic foot drop who receive FES, the evidence includes RCTs, meta-analyses, and a longitudinal cohort study. Relevant outcomes are functional outcomes and quality of life. For chronic poststroke foot drop, 2 RCTs comparing FES with a standard ankle-foot orthosis (AFO) showed improved patient satisfaction with FES but no significant differences between groups in objective measures such as walking. Another RCT found no significant differences between use

Functional Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation

Policy # 00042

Original Effective Date: 05/12/2003

Current Effective Date: 08/01/2026

versus no use of FES on walking outcomes. Similarly, 1 meta-analysis found no difference between AFO and FES in walking speed, and another meta-analysis found no difference between FES and conventional treatments. The cohort study assessed patients' ability to avoid obstacles while walking on a treadmill using FES versus AFO. Although the FES group averaged a 4.7% higher rate of avoidance, the individual results between devices ranged widely. One RCT with 53 subjects examining neuromuscular stimulation for foot drop in patients with multiple sclerosis showed a reduction in falls and improved patient satisfaction compared with an exercise program but did not demonstrate a clinically significant benefit in walking speed. Another RCT showed that at 12 months, both FES and AFO had improved walking speed, but the difference in improvement between the 2 devices was not significant. Another study found FES (combined with postural correction) and neuroproprioceptive facilitation and inhibition physiotherapy did not differ in walking speed or balance immediately or 2 months after program end. A reduction in falls is an important health outcome. However, it was not a primary study outcome and should be corroborated. The literature on FES in children with cerebral palsy includes 3 systematic reviews of small studies with within-subject designs. All included studies only measure short-term results; it is unclear what the long-term effects of FES may be in this population. Further study is needed. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have SCI at segments T4 to T12 who receive FES, the evidence includes case series. Relevant outcomes are functional outcomes and quality of life. No controlled trials were identified on FES for standing and walking in patients with SCI. However, case series are considered adequate for this condition because there is no chance for unaided ambulation in this population with SCI at this level. Some studies have reported improvements in intermediate outcomes, but improvements in health outcomes (eg, ability to perform activities of daily living [ADL], quality of life) have not been demonstrated. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have SCI who receive FES exercise equipment, the evidence includes prospective comparisons. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, functional outcomes, and quality of life. The evidence on FES exercise equipment consists primarily of within-subject, pretreatment to posttreatment comparisons. Evidence was identified on 2 commercially available FES cycle ergometer models for the home, the RT300 series and the REGYS/ERGYS series. There is limited evidence on the RT300 series. None of the within-subject studies showed an improvement in health benefits; however, improvement in body fat with RT300 was found in a small group of patients when FES high intensity interval cycling was added to nutrition counseling compared to nutritional counseling alone. One analysis of use for 314 individuals over 20,000 activity sessions with a Restorative Therapies device showed that a majority of users used the device for 34 minutes per week. Two percent of individuals with SCI used the device for an average of 6 days per week, but caloric expenditure remained low. Compliance was shown in 1 study to be affected by the age of participants and level of activity prior to the study. Studies on the REGYS/ERGYS series have more uniformly shown an improvement in physiologic measures of health and in sensory and motor function; however, a small comparative study found arm cycling to improve exercise energy expenditure and cardiorespiratory fitness to a greater extent than FES leg cycling. A limitation of these studies is that they all appear to have been conducted in supervised research centers. No studies

Policy # 00042

Original Effective Date: 05/12/2003

Current Effective Date: 08/01/2026

were identified on long-term home use of ERGYS cycle ergometers. The feasibility and long-term health benefits of using this device in the home is uncertain. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Supplemental Information

Practice Guidelines and Position Statements

Guidelines or position statements will be considered for inclusion in 'Supplemental Information' if they were issued by, or jointly by, a US professional society, an international society with US representation, or National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). Priority will be given to guidelines that are informed by a systematic review, include strength of evidence ratings, and include a description of management of conflict of interest.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

In 2009, NICE published guidance stating that the evidence on functional electrical stimulation for foot drop of neurologic origin appeared adequate to support its use. The Institute noted that patient selection should involve a multidisciplinary team. The Institute advised that further publication on the efficacy of functional electrical stimulation would be useful, specifically including patient-reported outcomes (eg, quality of life, activities of daily living [ADL]) and these outcomes should be examined in different ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommendations

Not applicable.

Medicare National Coverage

Medicare (2002; updated in 2006) issued a national coverage policy recommending coverage for neuromuscular electrical stimulation for ambulation in spinal cord injury patients consistent with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) labeling for the Parastep device. The Medicare decision memorandum indicates that Medicare considered the same data as those discussed herein in its decision-making process. The decision memorandum noted that the available studies were flawed but concluded that the limited ambulation provided by the Parastep device supported its clinical effectiveness and thus its coverage eligibility. The inclusion criteria outlined by Medicare are as follows:

- "Persons with intact lower motor units (L1 and below)...;
- Persons with muscle and joint stability for weight bearing at upper and lower extremities that can demonstrate balance and control to maintain an upright support posture independently;
- Persons who demonstrate brisk muscle contraction to NMES [neuromuscular electrical stimulation] and have sensory perception of electrical stimulation sufficient for muscle contraction;
- Persons that possess high motivation, commitment, and cognitive ability to use such devices for walking;
- Persons that can transfer independently and can demonstrate standing tolerance for at least 3 minutes;

Functional Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation

Policy # 00042

Original Effective Date: 05/12/2003

Current Effective Date: 08/01/2026

- Persons that can demonstrate hand and finger function to manipulate controls;
- Persons with at least 6-month post recovery spinal cord injury and restorative surgery;
- Persons without hip and knee degenerative disease and no history of long bone fracture secondary to osteoporosis; and
- Persons that have demonstrated a willingness to use the device long-term."

The exclusion criteria are as follows:

- "Persons with cardiac pacemakers;
- Severe scoliosis or severe osteoporosis;
- Skin disease or cancer at area of stimulation;
- Irreversible contracture; or
- Autonomic dysreflexia."

Ongoing and Unpublished Clinical Trials

Some currently unpublished trials that might influence this review are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Key Trials

NCT No.	Trial Name	Planned Enrollment	Completion Date
<i>Ongoing</i>			
NCT03410498	The Orthotic Effect of Functional Electrical Stimulation to Treat Foot Drop in People With MS Under Walking Conditions Simulating Those in Daily Life	20	Dec 2024
NCT04945395	The Effect of Using Functional Electric Stimulation for the Recovery of Dorsiflexion During Rehabilitation of Gait Function, in the Subacute Phase After Stroke- a Randomized Controlled Exploratory Study	20	Feb 2024
NCT00583804	Implanted Myoelectric Control for Restoration of Hand Function in Spinal Cord Injury	10 (actual)	Sep 2027
<i>Unpublished</i>			
NCT03495986	Spinal Cord Injury Exercise and Nutrition Conceptual Engagement (SCIENCE)	26	Jul 2024
NCT03949387	Functional Electrical Stimulation Cycling for Managing Mobility Disability in People With Multiple Sclerosis	10	Oct 2024
NCT03385005	Evaluating Neuromuscular Stimulation for Restoring Hand Movements	9	Oct 2023

Policy # 00042

Original Effective Date: 05/12/2003

Current Effective Date: 08/01/2026

NCT00890916	Hand Function for Tetraplegia Using a Wireless Neuroprosthesis	10	May 2021
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NCT: national clinical trial.

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Policy # 00042

Original Effective Date: 05/12/2003

Current Effective Date: 08/01/2026

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Policy # 00042

Original Effective Date: 05/12/2003

Current Effective Date: 08/01/2026

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Functional Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation

Policy # 00042

Original Effective Date: 05/12/2003

Current Effective Date: 08/01/2026

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Original Effective Date: 05/12/2003

Current Effective Date: 08/01/2026

04/25/2003	Medical Policy Committee review
05/12/2003	Managed Care Advisory Council approval
05/03/2005	Medical Director review
05/17/2005	Medical Policy Committee review. Format revision. Coverage eligibility unchanged.
05/23/2005	Managed Care Advisory Council approval
07/07/2006	Format revision, including addition of FDA and or other governmental regulatory approval and rationale/source. Coverage eligibility unchanged.
08/01/2007	Medical Director review
08/15/2007	Medical Policy Committee approval Coverage eligibility unchanged. Rationale /Source updated.

Functional Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation

Policy # 00042

Original Effective Date: 05/12/2003

Current Effective Date: 08/01/2026

08/06/2009	Medical Policy Committee approval.
08/26/2009	Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Coverage eligibility unchanged.
08/05/2010	Medical Policy Committee approval.
08/18/2010	Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Title changed to Functional Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation. Additional investigational statements added.
10/01/2010	Coding revision only
08/04/2011	Medical Policy Committee approval.
08/17/2011	Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. No change to coverage.
08/02/2012	Medical Policy Committee review
08/15/2012	Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Coverage eligibility unchanged.
08/01/2013	Medical Policy Committee review
08/21/2013	Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Coverage eligibility unchanged.
08/07/2014	Medical Policy Committee review
08/20/2014	Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Cerebral palsy added to investigational statement.
08/03/2015	Coding update: ICD10 Diagnosis code section added; ICD9 Procedure code section removed.
09/03/2015	Medical Policy Committee review
09/23/2015	Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Coverage eligibility unchanged.
12/01/2016	Medical Policy Committee review
12/21/2016	Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Coverage eligibility unchanged.
01/01/2017	Coding update: Removing ICD-9 Diagnosis Codes
12/07/2017	Medical Policy Committee review
12/20/2017	Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Coverage eligibility unchanged.
12/06/2018	Medical Policy Committee review
12/19/2018	Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Coverage eligibility unchanged.
12/05/2019	Medical Policy Committee review
12/11/2019	Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Coverage changes with the review of functional electrical stimulation exercise equipment added to policy; this is considered investigational.
07/02/2020	Medical Policy Committee review
07/08/2020	Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Coverage eligibility unchanged.
07/01/2021	Medical Policy Committee review
07/14/2021	Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Coverage eligibility unchanged.

Functional Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation

Policy # 00042

Original Effective Date: 05/12/2003

Current Effective Date: 08/01/2026

07/07/2022	Medical Policy Committee review
07/13/2022	Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Coverage eligibility unchanged.
07/06/2023	Medical Policy Committee review
07/12/2023	Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Coverage eligibility unchanged.
07/02/2024	Medical Policy Committee review
07/10/2024	Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Coverage eligibility unchanged.
07/03/2025	Medical Policy Committee review
07/09/2025	Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Coverage eligibility unchanged.
07/02/2026	Medical Policy Committee review
07/08/2026	Medical Policy Implementation Committee review
07/16/2026	Medical Quality Management Committee approval. Coverage eligibility unchanged.

Next Scheduled Review Date: 07/2027

Coding

The five character codes included in the Louisiana Blue Medical Policy Coverage Guidelines are obtained from Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®)†, copyright 2025 by the American Medical Association (AMA). CPT is developed by the AMA as a listing of descriptive terms and five character identifying codes and modifiers for reporting medical services and procedures performed by physician.

The responsibility for the content of Louisiana Blue Medical Policy Coverage Guidelines is with Louisiana Blue and no endorsement by the AMA is intended or should be implied. The AMA disclaims responsibility for any consequences or liability attributable or related to any use, nonuse or interpretation of information contained in Louisiana Blue Medical Policy Coverage Guidelines. Fee schedules, relative value units, conversion factors and/or related components are not assigned by the AMA, are not part of CPT, and the AMA is not recommending their use. The AMA does not directly or indirectly practice medicine or dispense medical services. The AMA assumes no liability for data contained or not contained herein. Any use of CPT outside of Louisiana Blue Medical Policy Coverage Guidelines should refer to the most current Current Procedural Terminology which contains the complete and most current listing of CPT codes and descriptive terms. Applicable FARS/DFARS apply.

CPT is a registered trademark of the American Medical Association.

Functional Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation

Policy # 00042

Original Effective Date: 05/12/2003

Current Effective Date: 08/01/2026

Codes used to identify services associated with this policy may include (but may not be limited to) the following:

Code Type	Code
CPT	95971, 95972
HCPCS	C1883, E0764, E0770
ICD-10 Diagnosis	All Related Diagnoses

*Investigational – A medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product is Investigational if the effectiveness has not been clearly tested and it has not been incorporated into standard medical practice. Any determination we make that a medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product is Investigational will be based on a consideration of the following:

- A. Whether the medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product can be lawfully marketed without approval of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and whether such approval has been granted at the time the medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product is sought to be furnished; or
- B. Whether the medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product requires further studies or clinical trials to determine its maximum tolerated dose, toxicity, safety, effectiveness, or effectiveness as compared with the standard means of treatment or diagnosis, must improve health outcomes, according to the consensus of opinion among experts as shown by reliable evidence, including:
 1. Consultation with technology evaluation center(s);
 2. Credible scientific evidence published in peer-reviewed medical literature generally recognized by the relevant medical community; or
 3. Reference to federal regulations.

‡ Indicated trademarks are the registered trademarks of their respective owners.

NOTICE: If the Patient's health insurance contract contains language that differs from the BCBSLA Medical Policy definition noted above, the definition in the health insurance contract will be relied upon for specific coverage determinations.

NOTICE: Medical Policies are scientific based opinions, provided solely for coverage and informational purposes. Medical Policies should not be construed to suggest that the Company recommends, advocates, requires, encourages, or discourages any particular treatment, procedure, or service, or any particular course of treatment, procedure, or service.

NOTICE: Federal and State law, as well as contract language, including definitions and specific contract provisions/exclusions, take precedence over Medical Policy and must be considered first in determining eligibility for coverage.

NOTICE: If an authorization for an ongoing course of treatment has been provided to a member and the member changes from one health plan to another health plan (e.g., a member moves from carrier A to Louisiana Blue), Louisiana Blue may honor the previous health plan's authorization for

Functional Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation

Policy # 00042

Original Effective Date: 05/12/2003

Current Effective Date: 08/01/2026

the same service under the same type of in-network benefit for a 90-day transition period. Documentation of the authorization for the ongoing course of treatment from the previous health plan must be provided to us by the member or their provider and the services provided for the course of treatment must otherwise be a covered service under the Louisiana Blue health plan. This provision does not apply to medications covered under the plan's pharmacy benefit.