Nutritional counseling is individualized advice and guidance given to members at nutritional risk due to nutritional history, current dietary intake, medication use or chronic illness, about options and methods for improving nutritional status. A certified, registered, or licensed healthcare professional functioning within the scope of his or her license provides this counseling.

Nutritional counseling is often required for members with conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, obesity, eating disorders, or other nutrition related conditions.

Nutritional counseling begins with assessing the person’s overall nutritional status, followed by an individualized prescription for treatment. The dietitian or health professional takes into account a person’s food intake, physical activity, course of any medical therapy including medications and other treatments, individual preferences, and other factors.

Nutritional counseling of individuals with eating disorders as part of a multidisciplinary approach to treatment, is supported by the American Psychological Association, the Academy for Eating Disorders, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

A multidisciplinary, coordinated approach to treatment includes a medical clinician, mental health clinician and dietician/nutritionist who, preferably, all have specialized knowledge and training in eating disorders.

Unique to the Registered Dietitian (RD) is the qualification to provide Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT). MNT is an essential component of comprehensive nutrition care. Disease or
conditions may be prevented, delayed, or managed, and quality of life improved in individuals receiving MNT. During MNT intervention, RDs counsel individuals on behavioral and lifestyle changes that impact long-term eating habits and health. MNT is an evidenced-based application of the Nutrition Care Process including:

1. Performing a comprehensive nutrition assessment
2. Determining the nutrition diagnosis
3. Planning and implementing a nutrition intervention using evidence-based nutrition practice guidelines
4. Monitoring and evaluating an individual’s progress toward goals Nutrition Therapy (MNT)

Policy

Coding Information
Click the links below for attachments, coding tables & instructions.
Attachment I- Procedural Coding Table & Instructions

Policy Guidelines

When a service may be considered medically necessary

- Medical Nutrition Therapy may be medically necessary for individuals with chronic diseases in which dietary adjustment has a therapeutic role (eating disorders, metabolic syndrome, coronary artery disease, hyperlipidemia, chronic kidney disease, hypertension, prediabetes, and diabetes); OR

- Medical Nutrition Therapy may be medically necessary for children or adults who are obese; OR

- Medical Nutrition Therapy may be medically necessary for adults who are overweight AND have a chronic disease.

There is no limit on the number of visits for nutritional counseling per member per plan year.

Documentation Required

All eating disorders visits, specified and unspecified, must include a clinical summary with a dietary assessment with any of the following information that is applicable:

- Frequency of nutrition counseling follow up appointments
- Treatment plan with goals
- Percent of meal plan compliance
- Weight chart with a goal weight range
  - Frequency of:
- Binges
- Purges
- Laxative misuse
- Number of meals skipped
- Number of minutes exercised
- Transition to/or from a higher level of care
- Percentage of day spent in food related thoughts
- Physical health
- Nutrition related abnormalities
- Flexibility in food selection and inclusion of fear foods

The nutrition professional must be in close communication with the primary care provider and therapist as non-food-related issues arise so they can be referred to the appropriate member of the treatment team.

Background

Definitions

Metabolic diseases are typically hereditary diseases or disorders that disrupt normal metabolism, the process of converting food to energy on a cellular level. Thousands of enzymes participating in numerous interdependent metabolic pathways carry out this process. Metabolic diseases affect the ability of the cell to perform critical biochemical reactions that involve the processing or transport of proteins (amino acids), carbohydrates (sugars and starches), or lipids (fatty acids).

Eating disorders are characterized by a persistent disturbance of eating that impairs health or psychosocial functioning. The disorders include anorexia nervosa, avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder, binge eating disorder, bulimia nervosa, pica, and rumination disorder.

Eating disorders exist on a continuum of severity and various stages of remission and the DSM-5 diagnostic criteria define levels of severity and levels of remission for anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder.

Anorexia Nervosa

Anorexia nervosa is characterized by dietary restriction that causes an abnormally low body weight and can be life threatening and require hospitalization in severe cases.

Symptoms Include:

- Restriction of energy intake that leads to a low body weight, given the patient’s age, sex, developmental trajectory, and physical health
- Intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat, or persistent behavior that prevents
weight gain, despite being underweight

- Distorted perception of body weight and shape, undue influence of weight and shape on self-worth, or denial of the medical seriousness of one’s low body weight

**Bulimia Nervosa**

Bulimia nervosa is characterized by a cycle of bingeing and compensatory behaviors such as self-induced vomiting designed to undo or compensate for the effects of binge eating. Bulimia nervosa can be harmful to multiple body systems.

**Symptoms Include**

- Episodes of binge eating, defined as consuming an amount of food in a discrete period of time that is definitely larger than what most people would eat in a similar amount of time under similar circumstances.
- A sense of lack of control overeating during the episode
- Recurrent inappropriate compensatory behavior to prevent weight gain
- Self-evaluation is unduly influenced by body shape and weight

**Binge Eating Disorder**

Binge Eating Disorder (BED) is a type of eating disorder that is characterized by recurrent binge eating without the regular use of compensatory measures to counter the binge eating.

**Symptoms Include**

- Episodes of binge eating, defined as consuming an amount of food in a discrete period of time that is definitely larger than what most people would eat in a similar amount of time under similar circumstances.
- A sense of lack of control overeating during the episode
- No regular use of inappropriate compensatory behaviors (eg, purging, fasting, or excessive exercise) as are seen in bulimia nervosa.

**Other Specified Feeding or Eating Disorder**

Formerly described at Eating Disorders Not Otherwise Specified (EDNOS) in the DSM-IV, Other Specified Feeding or Eating Disorder (OSFED), is a feeding or eating disorder that causes significant distress or impairment, and behaviors do not meet full criteria for any of the other feeding and eating disorders, but still cause clinically significant problems. The commonality
in all of these conditions is the serious emotional and psychological suffering and/or serious problems in areas of work, school or relationships. Significant clinical impact on daily health and functioning must be clearly documented for purposes of medical necessity.

**Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder**

- Failure to consume adequate amounts of food, with serious nutritional consequences, but without the psychological features of Anorexia Nervosa
- Reasons for the avoidance of food include fear of vomiting or dislike of the textures of the food

**Pica**

- The persistent eating of non-food items when it is not a part of cultural or social norms

**Rumination Disorder**

- Regurgitation of food that has already been swallowed. The regurgitated food is often re-swallowed or spit out

**Reference Resources**

Related Policies

Medical Food for Inherited Metabolic Disease (IMD)

Document Precedence

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont (BCBSVT) Medical Policies are developed to provide clinical guidance and are based on research of current medical literature and review of common medical practices in the treatment and diagnosis of disease. The applicable group/individual contract and member certificate language, or employer's benefit plan if an ASO group, determines benefits that are in effect at the time of service. Since medical practices and knowledge are constantly evolving, BCBSVT reserves the right to review and revise its medical policies periodically. To the extent that there may be any conflict between medical policy and contract/employer benefit plan language, the member’s contract/employer benefit plan language takes precedence.

Audit Information

BCBSVT reserves the right to conduct audits on any provider and/or facility to ensure compliance with the guidelines stated in the medical policy. If an audit identifies instances of non-compliance with this medical policy, BCBSVT reserves the right to recoup all non-compliant payments.

Administrative and Contractual Guidance

Benefit Determination Guidance

Benefits are subject to all terms, limitations and conditions of the subscriber contract.

NEHP/ABNE members may have different benefits for services listed in this policy. To confirm benefits, please contact the customer service department at the member’s health plan.

Federal Employee Program (FEP): Members may have different benefits that apply. For further information please contact FEP customer service or refer to the FEP Service Benefit Plan Brochure. It is important to verify the member’s benefits prior to providing the service to determine if benefits are available or if there is a specific exclusion in the member’s benefit.

Coverage varies according to the member’s group or individual contract. Not all groups are required to follow the Vermont legislative mandates. Member Contract language takes precedence over medical policy when there is a conflict.

If the member receives benefits through an Administrative Services Only (ASO) group, benefits may vary or not apply. To verify benefit information, please refer to the member’s
employer benefit plan documents or contact the customer service department. Language in the employer benefit plan documents takes precedence over medical policy when there is a conflict.

Policy Implementation/Update information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04/2003</td>
<td>Removed specific diagnosis codes. Replaces all memos or previous policies related to nutritional counseling, including TVHP. Applies to TVHP and BCSVT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/2003</td>
<td>Added specific billing codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/2003</td>
<td>Language changes to support certificate and clarify benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/2005</td>
<td>Language changes to support certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/2006</td>
<td>Reviewed with minor word changes only and addition of revenue code on attachment page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/2007</td>
<td>Reviewed no changes made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/2007</td>
<td>Reviewed by the CAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>08/2011</td>
<td>Policy written in new format. “Calendar Year” language changed “Plan Year”. CPT 97804 deleted as this is a group counseling code. Removed reference to BCBSVT policies. Removed State of Vermont Licensed Nutritionist from list of eligible providers as this is a non-existent category Coding reviewed and correct per Medical/Clinical Coder SAR.</td>
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<tr>
<td>06/2015</td>
<td>Added definitions of specific eating disorders and metabolic disease. Related policy: Inherited metabolic disease added. Clarification of policy guidelines. HCPCS (G codes) for nutrition therapy. Eating disorders added to attachment II.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/2017</td>
<td>Updated medical criteria around prior approval for additional visits. Updated related policies. Updated coding table to re-sequence ICD - 10 CM table.</td>
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<tr>
<td>07/2019</td>
<td>Reviewed added clarifying language around unspecified eating disorders and updated documentation requirement section.</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/2020</td>
<td>Added ICD-10-CM codes to table: F50.81 &amp; F50.89 to coding table.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/2022</td>
<td>Policy reviewed. No change to Policy Statement.</td>
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</table>
Updated policy to no longer require prior approval after three visits per plan year. Coding tables updated.

Eligible providers

Qualified healthcare professionals practicing within the scope of their license(s).

Approved by BCBSVT Medical Directors

Tom Weigel, MD, MBA
Vice President and Chief Medical Officer

Tammaji P. Kulkarni, MD
Senior Medical Director

Attachment I
Procedural Coding Table & Instructions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Policy Instructions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPT®</td>
<td>97802</td>
<td>Medical nutrition therapy; initial assessment and intervention, individual, face-to-face with the patient, each 15 minutes</td>
<td>Prior Approval Not Required</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPT®</td>
<td>97803</td>
<td>Medical nutrition therapy; re-assessment and intervention, individual, face-to-face with the patient, each 15 minutes</td>
<td>Prior Approval Not Required</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPT</td>
<td>97804</td>
<td>Medical nutrition therapy; group (2 or more individual(s)), each 30 minutes</td>
<td>Prior Approval Not Required</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCPCS</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>G0270</td>
<td>Medical nutrition therapy; reassessment and subsequent intervention(s) following second referral in same year for change in diagnosis, medical condition or treatment regimen (including additional hours needed for renal disease), individual, face to face with the patient, each 15 minutes</td>
<td>Prior Approval Not Required</td>
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<tr>
<td>G0271</td>
<td>Medical nutrition therapy; reassessment and subsequent intervention(s) following second referral in same year for change in diagnosis, medical condition or treatment regimen (including additional hours needed for renal disease), group (2 or more individuals), each 30 minutes</td>
<td>Prior Approval Not Required</td>
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<tr>
<td>S9452</td>
<td>Nutrition classes, non-physician provider, per session</td>
<td>Prior Approval Not Required</td>
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<td>S9470</td>
<td>Nutritional counseling, dietitian visit</td>
<td>Prior Approval Not Required</td>
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<tr>
<td>0942</td>
<td>Education/ Training</td>
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