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Developed By: Medical Criteria Committee	

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Approved: Csaba Mera, MD Date: 01/09/09

**Description:**

Virtual colonoscopy, also known as computed tomographic (CT) colography, is a non-invasive imaging technique of the colon. Multiple CT scans are taken of the patient's colon. The images are reconstructed with a computer to create a three-dimensional picture of the colon. Both virtual colonoscopy and conventional colonoscopy require a full bowel prep, however, virtual colonoscopy does not require sedation. Excellent bowel cleansing and bowel distention through insufflation of either atmospheric air or carbon dioxide via a small rectal tube are essential to completely evaluate the entire surface of the colon during a virtual colonoscopy. A drawback of virtual colonoscopy is that polyp removal and tissue biopsies in the colon must be performed using conventional colonoscopy.

**Criteria:**

- I. ODS will cover virtual colonoscopy to plan limitations for the following indications:
  - A. Conventional colonoscopy cannot be performed due to a known colonic lesion, obstructive tumor, or other structural abnormality; or
  - B. Member is receiving chronic anticoagulation that cannot be interrupted; or
  - C. Member has a contraindication to conventional colonoscopy
- II. ODS considers virtual colonoscopy experimental and investigational for any other indication when used as a routine screening for colorectal cancer. This test is considered investigational, as it is not supported by peer-reviewed medical literature, medical evidence, or appropriately conducted in-depth clinical trials. Available scientific data does not support the conclusion that virtual colonoscopy is similar to conventional colonoscopy in that virtual colonoscopy has been noted to have a lower sensitivity to smaller polyps. Polyps that are detected with virtual colonoscopy require subsequent endoscopic colonoscopy.
- III. ODS considers virtual colonoscopy experimental and investigational for the management of inflammatory bowel disease because its value for this indication has not been established.

**Information to be Submitted with Pre-Authorization Request:**

Chart notes documenting that the member has a contraindication to conventional colonoscopy or known colonic lesion, obstructive tumor or other structural abnormality.

**References:**

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