

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0212285		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	11/02/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	10/25/2013
<b>Decision Date:</b>	12/11/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	10/07/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	10/28/2015

### HOW THE IMR FINAL DETERMINATION WAS MADE

MAXIMUS Federal Services sent the complete case file to an expert reviewer. He/she has no affiliation with the employer, employee, providers or the claims administrator. He/she has been in active clinical practice for more than five years and is currently working at least 24 hours a week in active practice. The expert reviewer was selected based on his/her clinical experience, education, background, and expertise in the same or similar specialties that evaluate and/or treat the medical condition and disputed items/Service. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

The Expert Reviewer has the following credentials:

State(s) of Licensure: North Carolina

Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

### CLINICAL CASE SUMMARY

The expert reviewer developed the following clinical case summary based on a review of the case file, including all medical records:

The injured worker is a 59 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 10-25-2013. A review of the medical records indicates that the injured worker is undergoing treatment for arthropathy of lumbar facet joint, lumbago, sciatica, lumbar radiculopathy, and degeneration of lumbar intervertebral disc. On 9-17-2015, the injured worker reported increasing lower back pain rated 7 out of 10 on the visual analog scale (VAS). The Treating Physician's report dated 9-17-2015, noted the physical examination showed lumbar flexion limited due to moderate low back pain and extension limited due to facet loading pain with palpation of the lumbar facets elicited facet tenderness and positive bilateral straight leg raise. A MRI from 1-28-2014 was noted to show degenerative disc disease at L4-S1 with foraminal stenosis at L4-L5. Prior treatments have included home exercise program (HEP), chiropractic treatments, massage therapy, physical therapy, pain lotion, and anti-inflammatory and muscle relaxant medications as well as TENS unit since at least 11-12-2014. The treatment plan was noted to include a drug screen, a L4-L5 transforaminal epidural steroid injection (ESI) to be scheduled, start of anti-inflammatory cream, Diclofenac, and Protonix, and refill of the TENS unit patches. The request for authorization dated 10-1-2015, requested TENS electrodes 8 pairs per month 12 month supply and TENS AAA batteries 6 per month 12 month supply. The Utilization Review (UR) dated 10-7-2015, non-certified the requests for TENS electrodes 8 pairs per month 12 month supply and TENS AAA batteries 6 per month 12 month supply.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

The Final Determination was based on decisions for the disputed items/services set forth below:

**TENS electrodes 8 pairs per month 12 month supply: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Low Back Complaints 2004, and Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Transcutaneous electrotherapy.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Transcutaneous electrotherapy.

**Decision rationale:** The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation states: TENS, chronic pain (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation). Not recommended as a primary treatment modality, but a one-month home-based TENS trial may be considered as a noninvasive conservative option, if used as an adjunct to a program of evidence-based functional restoration, for the conditions described below. While TENS may reflect the long-standing accepted standard of care within many medical communities, the results of studies are inconclusive; the published trials do not provide information on the stimulation parameters which are most likely to provide optimum pain relief, nor do they answer questions about long-term effectiveness. (Carroll-Cochrane, 2001) Several published evidence-based assessments of transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) have found that evidence is lacking concerning effectiveness. One problem with current studies is that many only evaluated single-dose treatment, which may not reflect the use of this modality in a clinical setting. Other problems include statistical methodology, small sample size, influence of placebo effect, and difficulty comparing the different outcomes that were measured. This treatment option is recommended as an adjunct to a program of evidence based functional restoration. In addition there must be a 30 day trial with objective measurements of improvement. These criteria have not been met in the review of the provided clinical documentation and the request is not medically necessary.

**TENS AAA batteries 6 per month 12 month supply: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Low Back Complaints 2004, and Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Transcutaneous electrotherapy.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Transcutaneous electrotherapy.

**Decision rationale:** The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation states: TENS, chronic pain (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation). Not recommended as a primary treatment modality, but a one-month home-based TENS trial may be considered as a noninvasive conservative option, if used as an adjunct to a program of evidence-based functional restoration, for the conditions described below. While TENS may reflect the long-standing accepted standard of care within many medical communities, the results of studies are inconclusive; the published trials do not provide information on the stimulation parameters, which are most likely to provide optimum pain relief, nor do they answer questions about long-term effectiveness. (Carroll-Cochrane, 2001) Several published evidence-based assessments of transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation

(TENS) have found that evidence is lacking concerning effectiveness. One problem with current studies is that many only evaluated single-dose treatment, which may not reflect the use of this modality in a clinical setting. Other problems include statistical methodology, small sample size, influence of placebo effect, and difficulty comparing the different outcomes that were measured. This treatment option is recommended as an adjunct to a program of evidence based functional restoration. In addition there must be a 30 day trial with objective measurements of improvement. These criteria have not been met in the review of the provided clinical documentation and the request is not medically necessary.