



IEHP UM Subcommittee Approved Authorization Guideline			
Guideline	Natural Orifice Transluminal Endoscopic Surgery (NOTES)	Guideline #	UM SUR 06
		Original Effective Date	02/8/2017
Section	Surgical Procedures	Revision Date	05/20/2025
		Committee Approval Date	6/16/2025
		Effective Date	7/1/2025

COVERAGE POLICY

IEHP does not cover Natural Orifice Transluminal Endoscopic Surgery (NOTES) as a benefit. An exception is transoral incisionless fundoplication (TIF) which is covered for Medicare patients if done by a well-trained surgeon for the following indications:

1. Symptomatic chronic gastroesophageal reflux (chronic being defined as great than 6 months of symptoms), and
2. Symptoms must not be completely responsive to Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs) as judged by Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease-Health Related Quality of Life (GERD HRQL) scores of less than or equal to 12 while on PPIs and greater than or equal to 20 when off for 14 days (also acceptable would be the difference of greater than or equal to 10 of the scores between off and on therapy), and
3. Hiatal hernia less than or equal to 2 cm, including where the hernia has been reduced to 2 cm or less by a successful laparoscopic hernia reduction procedure prior to the **TIF** procedure. (Based on (FDA) approval).

Please refer to Appendix 1 for the GERD HRQL Questionnaire.

COVERAGE LIMITATIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

All other indications for NOTES are not covered.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

NOTES is an emerging technique within minimal access surgery in which the surgeon accesses the peritoneal cavity via a hollow viscus and performs diagnostic and therapeutic procedures (Pasricha, 2021). When utilized as the only surgical technique, the procedure is considered “pure-NOTES”. Pure-NOTES procedures can be further subdivided into “direct target” and “distant target” procedures. Distant target procedures require that a transluminal conduit be made in a hollow organ, like the stomach, to access another organ, like the appendix, whereas direct target procedures, like peroral endoscopic myotomy (POEM) for treatment of esophageal achalasia and, transanal total mesorectal excision, do not. Hybrid-NOTES procedures involve laparoscopic assistance (Atallah 2015).

CLINICAL/REGULATORY RESOURCE

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS):

There is no National Coverage Determination (NCD) regarding NOTES procedures. However, there is a Local Coverage Determination (LCD) applicable to the state of California concerning a NOTES procedure. More specifically, Endoscopic Treatment of GERD (L34659) discusses a TIF procedure for the treatment of patients in whom proton pump inhibitor therapy fails. An example of the device used in TIF is EsophyX™. This device can be utilized to reconstruct the lower esophageal sphincter (LES) at the top of the stomach to prevent acid reflux.

Medi-Cal:

There are no medical criteria for the use of NOTES. The only mention of transoral endoscopic surgery relates to CPT code 43211 (esophagoscopy, flexible, transoral; with endoscopic mucosal resection). This code is not reimbursable with CPT code 43202 when biopsy is performed on the same lesion. Providers must document when the procedure is performed on a different lesion in the Remarks field (Box 80)/Additional Claim Information field (Box 19) on the claim or on an attachment.

MCG Health

There are no guidelines available regarding this procedure.

Apollo Medical Review Criteria Guidelines

There are no guidelines available regarding this procedure.

Health Plans

Aetna

The EndoGastric StomaphyX™ or EsophyX™ endoluminal fastener and delivery system is considered experimental and investigational for the management of individuals with gastro-esophageal reflux disease (GERD) and all other indications because there is insufficient published scientific evidence to support the effectiveness of this intervention, especially with respect to long-term outcomes.

NOTES is mentioned as a type of endoscopic surgery offering the advantage of being a less invasive procedure for the treatment of GERD. However, it is noted that longer follow-up of patients who have had this surgery is necessary to verify the efficacy.

Cigna

There is a coverage policy which addresses minimally invasive anti-reflux procedures for the treatment of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and Peroral Endoscopic Myotomy (POEM) for the treatment of esophageal achalasia, gastroparesis or Zenker's diverticula. NOTES procedures are also discussed in a separate policy concerning bariatric surgery.

United Healthcare

Various types of Natural Orifice Transluminal Endoscopic Surgery (NOTES), such as transoral endoscopic surgery, transoral restorative obesity surgery (ROSE), Transpyloric Shuttle (TPS) and Endoscopic Sleeve Gastropasty (ESG) are being explored as options for bariatric surgery since they eliminate the need for abdominal incisions. These forms of surgery are being investigated as alternatives to conventional surgery.

REFERENCES

1. Aetna. 2024. Clinical Policy Bulletin 0213 Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD): Treatment Devices. http://www.aetna.com/cpb/medical/data/200_299/0213.html. Accessed 05/20/25.
2. Atallah S, Martin-Perez B, Keller D, Burke J, Hunter L. Natural-orifice transluminal endoscopic surgery. *British Journal of Surgery*. 2015;102(2):e73–e92. doi:10.1002/bjs.9710.
3. Castelijns, PSS, JEH Ponten, MCG vd Poll, ND Bouvy, JF Smulders. 2018. Quality of Life after Nissen fundoplication in patients with gastroesophageal reflux disease: Comparison between long- and short-term follow-up. *J Minim Access Surg*. 2018 Jul-Sep; 14(3): 213-220.
4. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. 2024. Local Coverage Determination (LCD): Endoscopic Treatment of GERD (L34659). <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/view/lcd.aspx?lcdid=34659&ver=30&bc=0>. Accessed 05/20/25.
5. Cigna. 2024. Medical Coverage Policy 0019 Minimally Invasive Anti-Reflux Procedures and Peroral Endoscopic Myotomy (POEM) Procedures. https://static.cigna.com/assets/chcp/pdf/coveragePolicies/medical/mm_0019_coveragepositioncriteria_endoscopic_treatment_for_gerd.pdf. Accessed 05/20/25.
6. Cigna. 2025. Medical Coverage Policy 0051 Bariatric Surgery and Procedures. https://static.cigna.com/assets/chcp/pdf/coveragePolicies/medical/mm_0051_coveragepositioncriteria_bariatric_surgery.pdf. Accessed 05/20/25.
7. UpToDate has multiple articles concerning Natural Orifice Transluminal Endoscopic Surgery (NOTES) procedures. <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/search>. Accessed 05/20/25.
8. Medi-Cal Provider Manual, Last updated September 2020. Surgery: Digestive System, Endoscopy. https://mcweb.apps.prd.cammis.medi-cal.ca.gov/assets/A4CA48D6-3C6D-4DB7-89ED-B36415E38860/surgdigest.pdf?access_token=6UyVkRRfByXTZEWIh8j8QaYylPyP5ULO. Accessed 05/20/25.
9. United Healthcare. 2025. Commercial Medical Policy. Bariatric Surgery. Policy # 2025T0362PP. <https://www.uhcprovider.com/content/dam/provider/docs/public/policies/comm-medical-drug/bariatric-surgery.pdf>. Accessed 05/20/25.

DISCLAIMER

IEHP Clinical Authorization Guidelines (CAG) are developed to assist in administering plan benefits, they do not constitute a description of plan benefits. The Clinical Authorization Guidelines (CAG) express IEHP's determination of whether certain services or supplies are medically necessary, experimental and investigational, or cosmetic. IEHP has reached these conclusions based upon a review of currently available clinical information (including clinical outcome studies in the peer-reviewed published medical literature, regulatory status of the technology, evidence-based guidelines of public health and health research agencies, evidence-based guidelines and positions of leading national health professional organizations, views of physicians practicing in relevant clinical areas, and other relevant factors). IEHP makes no representations and accepts no liability with respect to the content of any external information cited or relied upon in the Clinical Authorization Guidelines (CAG). IEHP expressly and solely reserves the right to revise the Clinical Authorization Guidelines (CAG), as clinical information changes.