Abdominoplasty/ Panniculectomy AHM

Clinical Indications

- Panniculectomy/apronectomy is considered medically necessary when all of the following indications are met:
  - Panniculus hangs below level of pubus, documented by photographs
  - The medical records document that the panniculus causes chronic intertrigo (dermatitis occurring on opposed surfaces of the skin, skin irritation, infection or chafing) that consistently recurs over 3 months while receiving appropriate medical therapy (e.g., oral or topical prescription medication), or remains refractory to appropriate medical therapy over a period of 3 months
  - Photographs with pannus lifted to document presence of intertrigo.

Panniculectomy/apronectomy is considered cosmetic when these criteria are not met.

Panniculectomy/apronectomy is considered experimental and investigational for minimizing the risk of hernia formation or recurrence. There is inadequate evidence that pannus contributes to hernia formation. The primary cause of hernia formation is an abdominal wall defect or weakness, not a pulling effect from a large or redundant pannus.

- Repair of a true incisional or ventral hernia is considered medically necessary.
- Repair of a diastasis recti, defined as a thinning out of the anterior abdominal wall fascia, is considered not medically necessary because, according to the clinical literature, it does not represent a "true" hernia and is of no clinical significance.
- Abdominoplasty, suction lipectomy, and lipoabdominoplasty are considered cosmetic.

Evidence Summary

Background

- In order to distinguish a ventral hernia repair from a purely cosmetic abdominoplasty, documentation of the size of the hernia is required, whether the ventral hernia is reducible, whether the hernia is accompanied by pain or other symptoms, the extent of diastasis (separation) of rectus abdominus muscles, whether there is a defect (as opposed to mere thinning) of the abdominal fascia, and office notes indicating the presence and size of the fascial defect. Abdominoplasty, known more commonly as a "tummy tuck," is a surgical procedure to remove excess skin and fat from the middle and lower abdomen.
and to tighten the muscles of the abdominal wall. The procedure can improve cosmesis by reducing the protrusion of the abdomen. However, abdominoplasty is considered to be cosmetic because it is not associated with functional improvements.

References


Reviewed by a Board Certified Internist
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Codes

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