Clinical Practice Guideline:		Physical Performance Testing or Measurement	
Date of	f Implementation:	November 15, 2018	
Produc	et:	Specialty	
		Related Policies: CPG 135: Physical Therapy Medical Policy CPG 155: Occupational Therapy Medical Policy CPG 278: Chiropractic Medical Policy	
to the Rehabi (RTW)	terms, conditions and limitative Therapy benefit and s services varies across plans	for Functional Capacity Evaluation (FCE) is subject ations of the applicable benefit plan's Short Term schedule of copayments. Coverage for return-to-work . Refer to the customer's benefit plan document for	
	ge details. The Functional Cap plans that include coverage f	pacity Evaluation section of this guideline is for those or RTW services.	
If cover	rage for RTW services is avai	ilable, the following conditions of coverage apply.	
Criteria <u>Medica</u> Functio	ally Necessary	nance testing or measurement are detailed here: E) is considered medically necessary when ALL of the	
•	A written referral (from plevaluator with the purpose o to guide test selection in the applications of an FCE).	hysician, carrier, or employer) is forwarded to the f the FCE explicitly stated (i.e., clearly defined goals e referral document and reflects one or more of the	
•	defined injury or following a	to determine return to work capabilities following a medically necessary rehabilitation.	
•		to answer a specific question or questions about the es and is addressed in the evaluation report.	
•	-	npared to meaningful standardized norms. I by a qualified provider/evaluator (see requirements	
	functional abilitie	tive pain assessment with self-reported effect on s and activities of daily living; ing examination; and	

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The FCE is typically not indicated prior to three months post-injury, unless there is a 1 significant documented change in the individual's status which justifies earlier 2 performance. FCEs are limited to 2-4 hours per date of service and one evaluation every 3 12 months if necessary. If a FCE is necessary within 12 months, cases will be reviewed 4 individually based on individual client/patient objective data compared to standardized 5 norms. A FCE may extend beyond 4 hours or two days to further quantify the ability of the 6 client to sustain the work tasks over a regular work schedule. The length of the FCE is 7 dependent upon: 8

- 9 10
- The complexity of the illness or injury and the resulting impairments;
- The availability of clearly defined work-related physical demands.
- 11

12 Not Medically Necessary

Return to work/reintegration or vocational programs including work hardening programs are considered vocational training, rather than treatment of illness or injury, and are considered not medically necessary.

16

17 <u>Unproven</u>

18 Quantitative (e.g., isokinetic) muscle testing devices (e.g., MedX, Isostation B-200, Cybex

19 II, Kin-Com, and Biodex) for the assessment of muscle strength are considered unproven.

20

21 CPT CODES AND DESCRIPTIONS

CPT® Codes	Description	
97750	Physical performance test or measurement (e.g., musculoskeletal,	
	functional capacity), with written report, each 15 minutes	
97545*	Work hardening/conditioning; initial 2 hours	
97546*	Work hardening/conditioning; each additional hour (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)	

22 *Considered educational or training in nature/not medically necessary

2324 DESCRIPTION

Physical testing or measurement describes tests and measurements performed by a 25 physician or other qualified health care professional. A physical performance test or 26 measurement may be reasonable and necessary for patients with neurological or 27 musculoskeletal conditions when there is a need to evaluate the ability to perform specific 28 tasks. It may include a number of multi-varied tests and measurements of physical 29 performance of a select area or number of areas. These services are not to be used in lieu 30 of evaluation or re-evaluation services. Testing may be manual and/or performed using 31 equipment. Some examples of testing that are typically reported with CPT code 97750 32 include: isokinetic testing for assessing the combination of strength, endurance and power 33 while performing certain movements with the trunk or extremities, functional capacity 34 testing, and specific test and measures related to balance such as the timed up-and-go test, 35

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and 6-minute walk test, with a computerized report of the patient's oxygen saturation levels with increasing stress levels, performed under a PT or OT plan of care on pulmonary rehabilitation patients. Standardized testing batteries may be incorporated into a physical performance test. It would not be appropriate to report a code from the 95851-95852 series in addition to 97750. It is not medically reasonable and necessary to bill this service as part

- of a routine assessment/evaluation of rehabilitation services. Direct one-on-one patient
 contact is required.
- 8

9 <u>Functional Capacity Evaluation</u>

A Functional Capacity Evaluation (FCE) is a method commonly used in work 10 rehabilitation for assessing the residual capacity of the injured worker for return to work. 11 The conceptual basis of the FCE is an evaluation of the person's potential to perform the 12 physical demands of work in a safe environment. The FCE is based on the observation of 13 the performance of the physical demands of work. FCEs are used as an adjunct method of 14 making judgments of performance potential and readiness for work following a 15 musculoskeletal injury. The FCE portion of this guideline is to be used when care 16 management is rendered for individuals with musculoskeletal conditions that are medically 17 stable yet demonstrate limitation of function and disability that impairs their ability to work 18 at full capacity. 19

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FCEs provide an objective measurement system to evaluate activity and activity limitations 21 with the specific purpose of matching physical abilities with essential and critical job 22 demands. FCEs also assist with identifying job modifications to enhance worker safety and 23 delineating functional capacities in case of litigation, impairment and disability. The focus 24 of the FCE is on the job demands and the performance of the job demands. Historically, 25 return-to-work decisions were based upon diagnoses and prognoses of physicians but did 26 not include objective work function information. Practitioners whose core competencies 27 include functional evaluation began to develop relative functional tests. These tests 28 examined and evaluated the ability to perform physical work functions as described in the 29 Selected Characteristics of Occupations as Defined in the Revised Dictionary of 30 Occupational Titles. Functional examination/evaluation, combined with diagnoses and 31 prognoses by trained clinicians has become an accepted tool for safely returning 32 33 individuals to employment.

34

35 **Quantitative Muscle Testing Devices**

Quantitative muscle testing devices have been used to quantify muscle strength and an individual's response to rehabilitation and therapy. Manual muscle testing is most commonly performed and is used to identify differences in strength between muscles, using qualitative grading to describe the strength of muscles. Computerized technologies have been proposed to quantify muscle strength. The MedX extension machine (MEDX Corp, Ocala, FL) and Isostation B200 (Isotechnologies, Inc., Hillsborough, NC) are two devices that have been designed for spinal muscle testing, and to improve spinal muscle strength

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1 through pelvic stabilization and isolation of specific groups of lumbar muscles. However,

2 evidence in the peer-reviewed scientific literature does not show that use of these devices

3 for muscle testing demonstrates better diagnostic utility than the established method of

4 manual muscle testing. Examples of these devices are described below:

- 5
- 6 MedX

The MedX lumbar/cervical extension machine is a device that can provide both functional 7 muscle testing of the spine and spinal therapy. It provides resistance over a full range of 8 isolated lumbar motion (72 degrees) or over a preselected limited range. The machine is 9 capable of setting isometric test points every three degrees within an individual's range of 10 motion. During the test, a computer software system plots the individual's actual range of 11 motion and strength in comparison to that of age and gender-matched norms. In exercise 12 mode, the compound weight stack can provide resistance from 10-400 foot pounds in 13 increments of one foot pound. It is proposed that use of this device can specifically test the 14 strength of the lumbar spine, and, through rehabilitation, the device can strengthen muscles. 15 The rehabilitation program typically lasts 12 weeks, with computerized strength and 16 motion testing performed every four weeks. 17

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19 Isostation B-200

The Isostation B-200 lumbar dynamometer is a device that can measure position, torque and velocity. It allows measurement of increasing fatigue by measuring the reduction speed in performance and noting increasing motion as muscle substitution becomes necessary. The device has been recommended for use in the treatment of persons with low back pain.

24

25 Isokinetic Testing Devices

Other types of quantitative muscle testing and strengthening devices, referred to as 26 isokinetic testing devices, measure muscle strength by applying a constant resistance over 27 a range of motion and speed. It is a rehabilitative exercise device intended for medical 28 purposes to measure, evaluate, and increase the strength of muscles and the range of motion 29 of joints. Based on testing results, strengthening exercises may be recommended. Isokinetic 30 exercise is exercise performed using a specialized apparatus that controls the speed of 31 movement within the range of motion. The exercise device provides variable resistance to 32 movement but allows movement at a constant speed. The device registers the force applied 33 to it by the user and offers the same amount of force as resistance. Cybex, Kin-Com, and 34 Biodex are machines that provide isokinetic testing and muscle strengthening exercise. 35 Evidence in the published scientific literature demonstrating the utility of these specific 36 devices for muscle testing or strengthening therapy or standard procedures and exercise 37 was not found. 38

1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

2 **Functional Capacity Evaluation**

FCE is a comprehensive, objective testing of a person's abilities in work related functional
 tasks. At times, it is used as a preliminary test to determine functional status and capabilities

5 prior to beginning a Work Hardening Program.

6

Work Hardening is a highly specialized rehabilitation program. It commonly begins 7 following traditional rehabilitation therapies. Its goal is to simulate workplace activities 8 and surroundings in a monitored environment to enable the patient to return to work. These 9 programs may be developed and carried out by an occupational therapist and/or a physical 10 therapist. The goal is to create an environment in which returning workers can rebuild 11 psychological self-confidence and physical reconditioning by imitating their customary 12 work routine. Work hardening programs refer to physical conditioning programs for 13 injured workers who are out of work, or who are working at less than full capacity. Work 14 hardening is a highly specialized rehabilitation program that transitions the patient from 15 standard rehabilitation to return to work by simulating workplace activities and 16 surroundings in a monitored environment. A wide range of programs conducted by a 17 number of different health disciplines have been reported in the professional and scientific 18 literature. In general, work hardening programs include a systematic program of gradually 19 20 progressive, work-related activities performed with proper body mechanics, with the goal of physically and psychologically reconditioning the patient in order to facilitate return to 21 full employment. 22

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An FCE may be indicated for the assessment of the worker's capacity to meet the physical demands of specific duties when other sources do not provide this information. It is noted that a work trial is often the most valid test of a worker's capacity.

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An FCE may be used as a source of information for the development of a RTW program/plan at the point of maximal medical improvement when:

- Treatment progress has reached a plateau/medically stationary;
- Discrepancy between subjective complaints and objective findings;
- Difficulty returning to gainful employment;
- Physical limitations and/or functional impairments hinder performance of regular
 work demands;
- 35
- Vocational planning, job placement and/or medico legal case settlement.
- 36

The FCE should be approached on a case-by-case basis. Comprehensive functional activities related to work duties should be observed and measured during the evaluation, keeping in mind that isometric or isokinetic tests of extremity or trunk torque are not sufficient, as these values mostly correlate poorly with performance of functional activities.

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Safety and prevention of further injury should be a main consideration and based on the 1 following principles: 2 • Communicate risks and contraindications 3 • Professional judgment is used to determine a safe maximal level for each test 4 component and FCE should only focus on critical job demands 5 • Cardiovascular system monitoring with modification FCE accordingly if changes 6 in heart rate, blood pressure or respiratory rate change excessively 7 Standardized criteria for ceasing a test must be established in advance, including 8 • but not limited to: 9 o Pain 10 o Nausea 11 • Dizziness 12 o Blurred vision 13 14 • Radicular symptoms • Continued use of unsafe body mechanics 15 16 17 Expected outcomes of an FCE include: Making recommendations about body mechanics, movements, techniques, and 18 modifications, such as safe manual handling and other actions which facilitate 19 return to work; and 20 Specifying proposed return to work duties or different duties. 21 • 22 The FCE should be performed in settings that meet all of the following: 23 • The equipment represents an appropriate reflection of work duties i.e., relevant 24 tests, normative standards, acceptable reliability and validity. 25 • The environment and space for the equipment meet work and equipment 26 specifications. 27 • The evaluator understands the equipment used during the FCE (i.e., training 28 completed if necessary). 29 • Appropriate maintenance and calibration of the equipment is documented and 30 available for review. 31 32 There are appropriate planning, facilities and equipment to respond to emergencies. • 33 34 **Evaluator Qualifications** The FCE shall be performed in its entirety by a physical or occupational therapist currently 35 holding a valid license, or other licensed provider qualified by scope of practice. The FCE 36 should be performed by evaluators who have education, training and competencies. 37 Competencies must be evident by certification, where required specific to the FCE system 38

that is being used, and by experience (having satisfactorily performed a minimum of five 39

- (5) FCEs. Proof of competencies may include a review by the Credentialing and Risk 40 Management Committee of a sampling of previously completed FCE reports. 41

Quantitative Muscle Testing Devices 1

These devices are utilized in rehabilitation settings as a therapeutic exercise and evaluation 2 tool. MedX and Isostation B-200 are devices used for spinal conditions. There are specific 3 protocols that are followed for the specific machines utilized. Testing is completed to 4 determine improvements over time. Isokinetic devices, such as the Biodex or Kin-Com, 5 are used as a form of therapeutic exercise. Typically, these devices are used for the knee 6 joint for strengthening of the quadriceps and hamstrings. However, other attachments are 7 available for the upper extremity joints, and hip and ankle joints. Use of these devices for 8 therapeutic exercise would be considered a form of therapeutic exercise and use of the CPT 9 codes specified in this guideline would not be appropriate. Testing protocols are utilized to 10 determine improvements and/or muscle strength ratios. Comprehensive reports are 11 produced demonstrating torques of muscles tested at the various speeds of movement. 12 Muscle strength ratios are also reported. CPT codes stated in this guideline refer to use of 13 these devices for testing and evaluation. Rehabilitation facility use of these devices have 14 dwindled over the years given the cost and space required for use. However, use within the 15 research environment continues with focus on the knee joint. Research published focuses 16 on the relationship of quadriceps and hamstrings strength with functional improvement, 17 return to sport, and re-injury. 18

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20 **DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES**

As code 97750 is a time-based code, the test or measurement procedure as well as the time 21 spent analyzing and interpreting the results in the presence of the patient are elements of 22 the visit that must be documented. The time element determines the number of units to be 23 reported for this procedure. Three time elements must be documented to correctly report 24 code 97750: 25

- 26
- Total time spent with the patient in providing the test and measurement, including 27 the time spent preparing the patient for the test and measurement procedure;
 - The time spent performing the selected protocol; and •
 - The time spent with the patient in providing any post-testing instructions. •
- 29 30

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The elements of documentation that support the reporting of code 97750, include 31 documentation of the testing elements and/or protocols, documentation of problem 32 requiring the test and the specific test performed, separate measurement report, including 33 any graphic reports and interpretation of the data collected, and impact on the patient's plan 34 of care (i.e., discharge, return to sport or activities of daily living [ADL], or modification 35 of treatment). Time spent in direct contact with the patient determines the number of units 36 to be reported for this procedure. 37

38

Functional Capacity Evaluation 39

Prior to the FCE, a written referral (from physician, carrier, or employer) must be 40 forwarded to the evaluator with the purpose of the FCE explicitly stated such as clearly 41 defined goals to guide test selection in the referral document and reflects one or more of 42

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1 the applications of an FCE. The referral source and evaluator should access and review any

2 relevant medical records, work related duties, prior attempts to return to work or FCEs (if

3 occurred) and reason for failure, and identify the RTW goals and potential options in

- 4 advance. Consideration of any comorbidities and their influence on the FCE and return to
- 5 work is imperative.
- 6

Results should be relevant to and comparable with the physical demands of a job when
identified. Written reports are required and must be submitted with the following
information:

- Patient demographics including work history;
- II Indication for evaluation;
 - Type of evaluation performed;
 - Raw and tabulated data;
- Normative data values;
 - Test results should be compared with normative data for the FCE employed;
- Narrative coversheet at the beginning of the document describing the results of the evaluation and recommendations.
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- 19 Where relevant, the detailed report should include the following additional areas:
- Results of subjective interview;
- Results of self-reported measures of disability;
 - Results of physical examination/screening;
 - Behavioral aspects including pain behavior and effort;
- Pace of work;
 - Clinical observations including body mechanics;
 - Functional abilities for the assessed physical demands.
- 26 27

28 LITERATURE REVIEW

There is limited evidence in the published peer-reviewed scientific literature evaluating the use of quantitative muscle testing devices. These devices have not been shown to be equally effective as other standard exercise equipment utilized in rehabilitation programs, nor is there sufficient evidence to suggest that use of quantitative muscle testing devices improves clinical health outcomes when compared to standard manual muscle testing.

34

35 **PRACTITIONER SCOPE AND TRAINING**

36 Practitioners should practice only in the areas in which they are competent based on their

- 37 education, training and experience. Levels of education, experience, and proficiency may
- vary among individual practitioners. It is ethically and legally incumbent on a practitioner

to determine where they have the knowledge and skills necessary to perform such services

40 and whether the services are within their scope of practice.

It is best practice for the practitioner to appropriately render services to a member only if they are trained, equally skilled, and adequately competent to deliver a service compared to others trained to perform the same procedure. If the service would be most competently delivered by another health care practitioner who has more skill and training, it would be best practice to refer the member to the more expert practitioner.

Best practice can be defined as a clinical, scientific, or professional technique, method, or
process that is typically evidence-based and consensus driven and is recognized by a
majority of professionals in a particular field as more effective at delivering a particular
outcome than any other practice (Joint Commission International Accreditation Standards
for Hospitals, 2020).

12

Depending on the practitioner's scope of practice, training, and experience, a member's condition and/or symptoms during examination or the course of treatment may indicate the need for referral to another practitioner or even emergency care. In such cases it is prudent for the practitioner to refer the member for appropriate co-management (e.g., to their primary care physician) or if immediate emergency care is warranted, to contact 911 as appropriate. See the *Managing Medical Emergencies (CPG 159 – S)* policy for information.

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