



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

EVIDENCE-BASED CRITERIA  
SECTION: MEDICINE

ORIGINAL EFFECTIVE DATE: 01/17/23  
LAST REVIEW DATE: 01/02/24  
CURRENT EFFECTIVE DATE: 01/02/24  
LAST CRITERIA REVISION DATE: 01/17/23  
ARCHIVE DATE:

NEXT ANNUAL REVIEW DATE: 1ST QTR 2025

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## ENDOSCOPIC RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION OR CRYOABLATION FOR BARRETT ESOPHAGUS

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Non-Discrimination Statement and Multi-Language Interpreter Services information are located at the end of this document.

Coverage for services, procedures, medical devices and drugs are dependent upon benefit eligibility as outlined in the member's specific benefit plan. This Evidence-Based Criteria must be read in its entirety to determine coverage eligibility, if any.

This Evidence-Based Criteria provides information related to coverage determinations only and does not imply that a service or treatment is clinically appropriate or inappropriate. The provider and the member are responsible for all decisions regarding the appropriateness of care. Providers should provide BCBSAZ complete medical rationale when requesting any exceptions to these guidelines.

The section identified as "Description" defines or describes a service, procedure, medical device or drug and is in no way intended as a statement of medical necessity and/or coverage.

The section identified as "Criteria" defines criteria to determine whether a service, procedure, medical device or drug is considered medically necessary or experimental or investigational.

State or federal mandates, e.g., FEP program, may dictate that any drug, device or biological product approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) may not be considered experimental or investigational and thus the drug, device or biological product may be assessed only on the basis of medical necessity.

Evidence-Based Criteria are subject to change as new information becomes available.

For purposes of this Evidence-Based Criteria, the terms "experimental" and "investigational" are considered to be interchangeable.

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## **ENDOSCOPIC RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION OR CRYOABLATION FOR BARRETT ESOPHAGUS**

### **Description:**

In Barrett esophagus (BE), the normal squamous epithelium is replaced by specialized columnar-type epithelium, known as intestinal metaplasia. Intestinal metaplasia is a precursor to adenocarcinoma and may be treated with mucosal ablation techniques such as radiofrequency ablation (RFA) or cryoablation.

### **Management of Barrett Esophagus**

The management of Barrett Esophagus (BE) includes the treatment of gastroesophageal reflux disease and surveillance endoscopy to detect progression to high-grade dysplasia (HGD) or adenocarcinoma. The finding of HGD or early-stage adenocarcinoma warrants mucosal ablation or resection (either endoscopic mucosal resection [EMR] or esophagectomy).

Radiofrequency ablation for Barrett esophagus with high-grade dysplasia (HGD) may be used in combination with endoscopic mucosal resection (EMR) of nodular or visible lesions. The diagnosis of HGD should be confirmed by 2 pathologists before initiating radiofrequency ablation. The American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy and the American Gastroenterological Association both recommend that a reading of HGD should be confirmed by an experienced gastrointestinal pathologist. Two cohort studies found that reevaluation of HGD after an initial evaluation resulted in 40% to 53% of individuals receiving a lower-grade evaluation on repeat endoscopy, highlighting the need for confirmation by an expert center. Additionally for HGD, it is important to rule out adenocarcinoma; referral to an expert center that can conduct high-definition white-light endoscopy and other diagnostic techniques has been found to increase the rate of adenocarcinoma detection and proper referral for EMR.

There is considerable interobserver variability in the diagnosis of low-grade dysplasia (LGD), and the potential exists for overdiagnosis of LGD by nonexpert pathologists (overdiagnosis is due primarily to the difficulty in distinguishing inflammatory changes from LGD). There is evidence in the literature that expert gastrointestinal pathologists will downgrade a substantial portion of biopsies that are initially read as LGD by nonexperts. As a result, it is ideal that 2 experts in gastrointestinal pathology agree on the diagnosis to confirm LGD; this may result in greater than 75% of initial diagnoses of LGD being downgraded to nondysplasia. A review by a single expert gastrointestinal pathologist will also result in a large number of LGD diagnoses being downgraded, although probably not as many as achieved using 2 expert pathologists.

### **Radiofrequency ablation (RFA):**

A minimally invasive procedure in which a bi-polar electrode balloon is placed in the esophagus and inflated using precisely controlled radiofrequency energy to ablate the dysplastic tissue.

### **Cryoablation:**

A minimally invasive procedure that uses a low-pressure spray to apply liquid nitrogen through an upper endoscope to ablate dysplastic tissue in the esophagus.



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## ENDOSCOPIC RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION OR CRYOABLATION FOR BARRETT ESOPHAGUS

### Criteria:

- Radiofrequency ablation for the treatment of Barrett esophagus with high-grade dysplasia is considered **medically necessary**.
- Radiofrequency ablation for the treatment of Barrett esophagus with low-grade dysplasia, when the initial diagnosis of low-grade dysplasia is confirmed by 2 pathologists is considered **medically necessary**.
- Radiofrequency ablation for the treatment of Barrett esophagus when the above criteria are not met, including but not limited to Barrett esophagus in the absence of dysplasia is considered **experimental or investigational** when any **ONE** or more of the following criteria are met:
  1. Lack of final approval from the appropriate governmental regulatory bodies (e.g., Food and Drug Administration); or
  2. Insufficient scientific evidence to permit conclusions concerning the effect on health outcomes; or
  3. Insufficient evidence to support improvement of the net health outcome; or
  4. Insufficient evidence to support improvement of the net health outcome as much as, or more than, established alternatives; or
  5. Insufficient evidence to support improvement outside the investigational setting.
- Cryoablation for the treatment of Barrett esophagus, with or without dysplasia is considered **experimental or investigational** when any **ONE** or more of the following criteria are met:
  1. Lack of final approval from the appropriate governmental regulatory bodies (e.g., Food and Drug Administration); or
  2. Insufficient scientific evidence to permit conclusions concerning the effect on health outcomes; or
  3. Insufficient evidence to support improvement of the net health outcome; or
  4. Insufficient evidence to support improvement of the net health outcome as much as, or more than, established alternatives; or
  5. Insufficient evidence to support improvement outside the investigational setting.

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## ENDOSCOPIC RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION OR CRYOABLATION FOR BARRETT ESOPHAGUS

### Resources:

Literature reviewed 01/02/24. We do not include marketing materials, poster boards and non-published literature in our review.

Resources prior to 01/17/23 may be requested from the BCBSAZ Medical Policy and Technology Research Department.

1. Agarwal S, Alshelleh M, Scott J, et al. Comparative outcomes of radiofrequency ablation and cryoballoon ablation in dysplastic Barrett's esophagus: a propensity score-matched cohort study. *Gastrointest Endosc.* Mar 2022;95(3):422-431 e2. doi:10.1016/j.gie.2021.09.037
2. Bhat S, Coleman HG, Yousef F, et al. Risk of malignant progression in Barrett's esophagus patients: results from a large population-based study. *J Natl Cancer Inst.* Jul 6 2011;103(13):1049-57. doi:10.1093/jnci/djr203
3. Chadwick G, Groene O, Markar SR, Hoare J, Cromwell D, Hanna GB. Systematic review comparing radiofrequency ablation and complete endoscopic resection in treating dysplastic Barrett's esophagus: a critical assessment of histologic outcomes and adverse events. *Gastrointest Endosc.* May 2014;79(5):718-731.e3. doi:10.1016/j.gie.2013.11.030
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5. Downs-Kelly E, Mendelin JE, Bennett AE, et al. Poor interobserver agreement in the distinction of high-grade dysplasia and adenocarcinoma in pretreatment Barrett's esophagus biopsies. *Am J Gastroenterol.* Sep 2008;103(9):2333-40; quiz 2341. doi:10.1111/j.1572-0241.2008.02020.x
6. Duits LC, Phoa KN, Curvers WL, et al. Barrett's oesophagus patients with low-grade dysplasia can be accurately risk-stratified after histological review by an expert pathology panel. *Gut.* May 2015;64(5):700-6. doi:10.1136/gutjnl-2014-307278
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11. Fleischer DE, Overholt BF, Sharma VK, et al. Endoscopic ablation of Barrett's esophagus: a multicenter study with 2.5-year follow-up. *Gastrointest Endosc*. Nov 2008;68(5):867-76. doi:10.1016/j.gie.2008.03.008
12. Fleischer DE, Overholt BF, Sharma VK, et al. Endoscopic radiofrequency ablation for Barrett's esophagus: 5-year outcomes from a prospective multicenter trial. *Endoscopy*. Oct 2010;42(10):781-9. doi:10.1055/s-0030-1255779
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17. Klair JS, Zafar Y, Nagra N, et al. Outcomes of Radiofrequency Ablation versus Endoscopic Surveillance for Barrett's Esophagus with Low-Grade Dysplasia: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Dig Dis*. 2021;39(6):561-568. doi:10.1159/000514786
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22. Pentax Medical. Pentax Medical Introduces Next-Generation C2 Cryoballoon Ablation System for Treatment of Barrett's Esophagus. Accessed September 14, 2023. <https://www.pentaxmedical.com/pentax/en/99/1/PENTAX-MEDICAL-INTRODUCES-NEXT-GENERATION-C2-CRYOBALLOON-ABLATION-SYSTEM-FOR-TREATMENT-OF-BARRETTS-ESOPHAGUS>
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40. 510(k) Safety Summary: CryoSpray Ablation System. No. K072651. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. 2007. Accessed September 14, 2023. [https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/cdrh\\_docs/pdf7/K072651.pdf](https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/cdrh_docs/pdf7/K072651.pdf)
41. 510(k) Summary: BARRX Channel RFA Endoscopic Catheter. No. K130623. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. 2013. Accessed September 13, 2023. [https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/cdrh\\_docs/pdf13/K130623.pdf](https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/cdrh_docs/pdf13/K130623.pdf)



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[https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/cdrh\\_docs/pdf16/K163684.pdf](https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/cdrh_docs/pdf16/K163684.pdf)

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### Coding:

CPT: 43229, 43270, 43499

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### History:

### Date:

### Activity:

Medical Policy Panel	01/02/24	Review with revisions
Medical Policy Panel	01/17/23	Approved guideline

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### Policy Revisions:

01/02/24 Updated: Resources section





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### Non-Discrimination Statement:

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona (BCBSAZ) complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex. BCBSAZ provides appropriate free aids and services, such as qualified interpreters and written information in other formats, to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us. BCBSAZ also provides free language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as qualified interpreters and information written in other languages. If you need these services, call (602) 864-4884 for Spanish and (877) 475-4799 for all other languages and other aids and services.

If you believe that BCBSAZ has failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex, you can file a grievance with: BCBSAZ's Civil Rights Coordinator, Attn: Civil Rights Coordinator, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona, P.O. Box 13466, Phoenix, AZ 85002-3466, (602) 864-2288, TTY/TDD (602) 864-4823, [crc@azblue.com](mailto:crc@azblue.com). You can file a grievance in person or by mail or email. If you need help filing a grievance BCBSAZ's Civil Rights Coordinator is available to help you. You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights electronically through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, available at <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>, or by mail or phone at: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Avenue SW., Room 509F, HHH Building, Washington, DC 20201, 1-800-368-1019, 800-537-7697 (TDD). Complaint forms are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>

### Multi-Language Interpreter Services:

Spanish: Si usted, o alguien a quien usted está ayudando, tiene preguntas acerca de Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona, tiene derecho a obtener ayuda e información en su idioma sin costo alguno. Para hablar con un intérprete, llame al 602-864-4884.

Navajo: Dii kwe'é atah nilinigií Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona haada yit'éego bina'idilkidgo éi doodago Háida bíjá anilyeedigií t'áadoo le'é yina'idilkidgo beehaz'áanii hólo dii t'áá hazaadk'ehjí háká a'doowotgo bee haz'á doo baqah ilinígóó. Ata' halne'ígíí kojí' bich'í' hodilnih 877-475-4799.

Chinese: 如果您，或是您正在協助的對象，有關於插入項目的名稱 Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona 方面的問題，您有權利免費以您的母語得到幫助和訊息。洽詢一位翻譯員，請撥電話 在此插入數字 877-475-4799。

Vietnamese: Nếu quý vị, hay người mà quý vị đang giúp đỡ, có câu hỏi về Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona quý vị sẽ có quyền được giúp và có thêm thông tin bằng ngôn ngữ của mình miễn phí. Để nói chuyện với một thông dịch viên, xin gọi 877-475-4799.

Arabic:

إن كان لديك أو لدى شخص تساعد أسئلة بخصوص Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona، فلديك الحق في الحصول على المساعدة والمعلومات الضرورية بلغتك من دون أية تكلفة. للتحدث مع مترجم اتصل بـ 877-475-4799.

