

## *Spinal Unloading Devices*

<b>Origination:</b> 03/30/09	<b>Revised:</b>	<b>Annual Review:</b> 12/15/11
------------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------------

### **Purpose:**

The Medical Technology Assessment Committee will review published scientific literature and information from appropriate government regulatory bodies (when available) related to Spinal Unloading Devices in order to determine inclusion in the benefit plan.

### **Compliance Status:**

- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS): Medicare has a national coverage policy that states the non-coverage of Vertebral Axial Decompression (VAX-D).

### **Recommendation:**

A recommendation was made by the MTAC following discussion by committee members based on current literature:

- The use of *devices for spinal unloading* is considered experimental and investigational. Reimbursement for their use and any associated modalities and visits is not a covered benefit.

### ***Definition***

- Spinal unloading devices are advocated for non-surgical treatment of back pain and other back ailments. These devices come in various forms, including patient operated ones, and usually utilize computer-controlled mechanical tables to apply tension or stretching along the spinal axis. Currently there is insufficient evidence to indicate that they are useful in treating back pain or preventing surgery.

### ***Example of devices used for spinal unloading (this list is not to be considered all-inclusive)***

Accu-Spina System	LTX 3000
Antalgic-Trak	Orthotrac Pneumatic Vest
AxiomWorldWide (DRX-2000, DRX-3000, DRX-5000, DRX-9000)	NuChoice Medical Healthstar Elite Decompression Therapy
Cert Health Services SpineMEDDecompression Table	Saunder 3D ActiveTrac
Decompression Reduction Stabilization (DRS) System	Spinex LDM
Internal Disc Decompression (IDD) Therapy	Tru Trak 401
Lordex Traction Unit	VAX-D

## *Spinal Unloading Devices*

### **References:**

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA). HCFA Technology Advisory Committee Minutes, August 6 - 7, 1996. Baltimore, MD: HCFA; 1996.
2. F-D-C Reports. FDA Recalls & Court Actions: Manuals for VAX-D Therapeutic Table. The Gray Sheet. 1996 Aug;22(34).
3. Gose EE, Naguszewski WK, Naguszewski RK. Vertebral axial decompression therapy for pain associated with herniated or degenerated discs or facet syndrome: An outcome study. *Neurol Res.* 1998;20(3):186-190.
4. Ramos G, Martin W. Effects of vertebral axial decompression on intradiscal pressure. *J Neurosurg.* 1994;81(3):350-353.
5. Shealy CN, Borgmeyer V. Decompression, reduction, and stabilization of the lumbar spine: A cost-effective treatment for lumbosacral pain. *Am J Pain Mgmt.* 1997;7(2):63-65.
6. Sherry E, Kitchener P, Smart R. A prospective randomized controlled study of VAX-D and TENS for the treatment of chronic low back pain. *Neurol Res.* 2001;23(7):780-784.
7. Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC). Vertebral axial decompression (VAX-D) therapy for low back pain. Assessment Report. MSAC application 1012. Canberra, ACT: MSAC; June 2001.
8. Tilaro F. An overview of vertebral axial decompression. *Canadian J Clin Med.* 1998;5(1):1-7.
9. Tilaro F, Miskovich D. The effects of vertebral axial decompression on sensory nerve dysfunction in patients with low back pain and radiculopathy. *Canadian J Clin Med.* 1999;6(1):2-7.
10. Naguszewski WK, Naguszewski RK, Gose EE. Dermatosomal somatosensory evoked potential demonstration of nerve root decompression after VAX-D therapy. *Neurol Res.* 2001;23(7):706-714.
11. Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, Office of the Medical Director. Vertebral axial decompression (Vax-D). Technology Assessment. Olympia, WA: Washington State Department of Labor and Industries; 1999.

## *Spinal Unloading Devices*

### **References, continued:**

12. Deen HG Jr, Rizzo TD, Fenton DS. Sudden progression of lumbar disk protrusion during vertebral axial decompression traction therapy. *Mayo Clin Proc.* 2003;78(12):1554-1556.
13. Wang G. Powered traction devices for intervertebral decompression. Health Technology Assessment Update. Olympia, WA: Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, Office of the Medical Director; June 14, 2004. Martin CW; Workers Compensation Board of British Columbia (WCB) Evidence Based Practice Group. Vertebral axial decompression for low back pain. Report. Richmond, BC: Workers Compensation Board of British Columbia (WorkSafe BC); 2005.
14. Jurecki-Tiller M, Bruening W, Tregear S, et al. Decompression therapy for the treatment of lumbosacral pain. Prepared by the ECRI Institute Evidence-Based Practice Center for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) (Contract No. 290-02-0019). Rockville, MD: AHRQ; April 26, 2007.

### **Disclaimer Information:**

Coverage Issues Guidelines and Medical Technology Assessment Recommendations are developed to determine coverage for AvMed Health Plans' benefits, and are published to provide a better understanding of the basis upon which coverage decisions are made. AvMed Health Plans makes coverage decisions using these guidelines, along with the Member's benefit document. The use of this guideline is neither a guarantee of payment nor a final prediction of how specific claim(s) will be adjudicated.

Coverage Issues Guidelines and Medical Technology Assessment Recommendations are developed for selected therapeutic or diagnostic services found to be safe, but proven effective in a limited, defined population of patients or clinical circumstances. They include concise clinical coverage criteria based on current literature review, consultation with practicing physicians in the AvMed Health Plans service area who are medical experts in the particular field, FDA and other government agency policies, and standards adopted by national accreditation organizations.

Treating providers are solely responsible for the medical advice and treatment of Members. This guideline may be updated and therefore is subject to change.