Chemical Peels

Medical Guideline Disclaimer

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Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actinic keratosis (AK)</th>
<th>Actinic keratoses (AKs or solar keratoses) are keratotic macules, papules, or plaques resulting from the intraepidermal proliferation of atypical keratinocytes in response to prolonged exposure to ultraviolet radiation. Although most AKs do not progress to squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), AKs are a concern because the majority of cutaneous SCCs arise from pre-existing AKs, and AKs that will progress to SCC cannot be distinguished from AKs that will spontaneously resolve or persist. Accepted primary treatment modalities include cryotherapy, topical 5-fluorouracil, topical imiquimod, photodynamic therapy (eg, amino levulinic acid [ALA], porfimer sodium), and curettage and electrodesiccation.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chemical peel</td>
<td>Controlled removal of varying layers of the skin with use of caustic chemical agents; resulting in a thinner, more compact stratum corneum, thicker epidermis, and uniform distribution of melanin. Peels are typically categorized according to depth and agent used.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Agents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very superficial (See Limitations/Exclusions)</td>
<td>Glycolic acid, 30-50 percent applied for 1-2 minutes&lt;br&gt;J Jessner (resorcinol, salicylic acid, lactic acid, ethanol) solution applied in 1-3 coats&lt;br&gt;Low concentration resorcinol, 20-30 percent applied for 5-10 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Superficial (See Limitations/Exclusions)</td>
<td>TCA (trichloroacetic acid) 10 percent applied in 1 coat&lt;br&gt;Glycolic acid, 50-70 percent, applied for 2-5 minutes&lt;br&gt;Pyruvic acid, 40-50 percent applied for 3-5 minutes&lt;br&gt;J Jessner solution applied in 4-10 coats&lt;br&gt;Resorcinol, 40-50 percent applied for 30-60 minutes&lt;br&gt;TCA, 10-30 percent</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Medium
- Glycolic acid 70 percent applied for 3-15 minutes
- Pyruvic acid 60 percent applied for 3-5 minutes
- TCA, 35-50 percent
- Augmented TCA (carbon dioxide and TCA 35 percent; Jessner solution and TCA 35 percent; glycolic acid 70 percent and TCA 35 percent)

### Deep
- Phenol 88 percent
- Baker-Gordon phenol formula (88 percent phenol, distilled water, septisol, croton oil)

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**Related Guidelines**

- **Cosmetic Surgery Procedures**
- **Phototherapy, Photochemotherapy and Photodynamic Therapy for Dermatologic Conditions**

**Guideline**

Medium or deep chemical peels are considered medically necessary for > 10 actinic keratoses (or other premalignant skin lesions) due to the impracticality of treating large numbers of lesions individually.

**Limitations/Exclusions**

1. Chemical peels are not considered medically necessary for the treatment of active acne vulgaris due to insufficient evidence of therapeutic value.
2. Chemical peels are not considered medically necessary when for the following cosmetic purposes (list not all-inclusive):
   - Acne scarring (case-by-case review when documentation substantiating medical necessity is submitted to the plan)
   - Contouring/discoloration/hyperpigmentation (e.g., dermatosis papulosa nigra, rosacea)
   - Dull complexity
   - Ephelides (freckles)
   - Fine/fewer lines and wrinkles
   - Lentigines (liver spots; aka age spots)
   - Melasma
   - Photoaged skin
   - Sebaceous hyperplasia (aka senile hyperplasia)
   - Seborrheic keratoses
   - Skin roughness

**Applicable Procedure Codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15788</td>
<td>Chemical peel, facial; epidermal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15789</td>
<td>Chemical peel, facial; dermal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15792</td>
<td>Chemical peel, nonfacial; epidermal</td>
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<tr>
<td>15793</td>
<td>Chemical peel, nonfacial; dermal</td>
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Applicable Diagnosis Codes

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>D48.5</td>
<td>Neoplasm of Uncertain Behavior of Skin</td>
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<tr>
<td>L57.0</td>
<td>Actinic keratosis</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

References


Specialty matched clinical peer review.


