

Differentiating Between Complex Rehab Technology and Standard Mobility Products

Background

Durable Medical Equipment (often referred to as Home Medical Equipment or HME) includes a wide range of equipment, accessories, services, and supplies to meet the medical needs of patients in the home care setting.

For people with mobility impairments and disabilities, manual wheelchairs and power mobility devices provide greater mobility and function. A wide variety of products are available to meet the individual’s needs, ranging from a standard manual wheelchair to a highly individualized and customized power chair. Each offers components (called “accessories”) that are added to the base chair to meet the individual’s medical needs and to provide greater functionality for the patient.

Complex Rehab Technology (CRT) is prescribed when standard mobility does not meet the individual’s unique and specific anatomical, medical, or functional needs. CRT includes highly configurable manual wheelchairs, power wheelchairs, adaptive seating and positioning systems, and other specialized equipment such as standing frames and gait trainers.

How CRT Differs from Standard DME

Both standard wheelchairs and CRT require the same process in following the insurance coverage criteria, conducting a patient evaluation, documenting, and filing paperwork for insurance. However, there are key differences in their design, technology, and clinical involvement that make each mobility category unique and appropriate for certain populations. Further, CRT requires additional clinical and billing processes for insurance coverage.

CRT requires a broader range of services than standard mobility. Standard mobility products differ significantly from their CRT counterparts as illustrated in this graph:

ELEMENTS	Standard Manual Wheelchairs	CRT Manual Wheelchairs	Standard Power Wheelchairs	CRT Power Wheelchairs
				
END USERS				
Patient Population	<p>Mobility impairment that limits patient’s ability to participate in mobility-related activities of daily living</p> <p>May include people with difficulty ambulating; people at the beginning stage of a disease</p>	<p>Have significant disabilities, requiring individually configured & customized mobility equipment to meet needs.</p> <p>May Include people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), paralysis, spinal</p>	<p>Mobility impairment that limits patient’s ability to participate in mobility-related activities of daily living</p> <p>May include people with pulmonary disease, cardiac</p>	<p>Have significant disabilities, requiring individually configured & customized mobility equipment to meet needs.</p> <p>May Include people with Multiple</p>

	Standard Manual Wheelchairs	CRT Manual Wheelchairs	Standard Power Wheelchairs	CRT Power Wheelchairs
		cord injuries, cerebral palsy, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), Spina Bifida, Muscular Dystrophy.	disease, amputations, people at the beginning stage of a disease	Sclerosis (MS), paralysis, spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), Spina Bifida, Muscular Dystrophy
Length of Need	Short- or Long- Term	Permanent/Long-Term	Permanent/Long-Term	Permanent/Long Term
PRODUCT DESIGN				
Individually Configured	Limited/minimal adjustability options to meet the physical needs of the individual	Individually configured & customized device, to meet the patient's individual medical, physical, and functional needs.	Limited/minimal adjustability options to meet the medical and physical needs of the individual.	Individually configured & customized device to meet the patient's individual medical, physical, and functional needs.
Positioning Capacity & Pressure Management	BASE CHAIR: Basic—Standard configured size and material weight, (such as lightweight chair) and fixed axles. ACCESSORIES: Basic options	BASE CHAIR: Advanced—Individually configured sizes and material weights (such as ultra-lightweight chair), adjustable axle plates, lateral axle spacing, seat to back angle adjustments. Also includes tilt & space options on certain chairs. ACCESSORIES: Advanced options	BASE CHAIR: Basic seating adjustments, only accommodates standard electronics ACCESSORIES: Basic options	BASE CHAIR: Advanced seating adjustments (ex. tilt, recline, seat elevation), accommodates advanced electronics with power options ACCESSORIES: Advanced options including alternate drive controls (such as sip-and-puff and head array).
CLINICAL & PERSONNEL INVOLVEMENT				
Process for Prescribing and Fitting	Physician identifies the individual's medical and functional needs and prescribes standard mobility device. Supplier conducts a patient measurement and assessment to provide a device that meets the needs. Supplier also conducts home assessment.	Interdisciplinary effort, including clinical team (at minimum prescribing physician, Physical or Occupational Therapist) to identify individual's medical & functional needs. With clinical input, the supplier's Assistive Technology Professional (ATP) matches the appropriate product through measuring, evaluation, configuration, simulations/trials, adjustment, and	Physician identifies the individual's medical and functional needs and prescribes standard mobility device. Supplier conducts a patient measurement and assessment to provide a device that meets the needs. Supplier also conducts home assessment.	Interdisciplinary effort, including clinical team (at minimum prescribing physician, Physical or Occupational Therapist) to identify individual's medical & functional needs. With clinical input, the suppliers Assistive Technology Professional (ATP) Matches the appropriate product through measuring, evaluation, configuration, simulations/trials,

	Standard Manual Wheelchairs	CRT Manual Wheelchairs	Standard Power Wheelchairs	CRT Power Wheelchairs
		customization to build a device that meets the patient's unique mobility needs. Supplier also conducts home assessment.		adjustment, and customization to build a device that meets the patient's unique mobility needs. Supplier also conducts home assessment.
Supplier Assistive Technology Professional (ATP)	Not Required	Required	Not Required	Required

Different Products, Same HCPCS Code

The current HCPCS coding system groups both basic and advanced high-end accessories together in the same HCPCS code. As a result, many payors, including Medicare, currently do not distinguish CRT from standard mobility products and components (“accessories”) in their coding systems. This has caused reimbursement issues, as the costs of providing, configuring, and customizing advanced, high-end products is significantly more labor-intensive than providing basic standard accessories. Below are examples of overly-broad HCPCS:

HCPCS	Standard Accessory	Advanced Accessory
E0955: Wheelchair accessory, headrest, cushioned, any type, including fixed mounting hardware, each	 <p><i>Basic Headrest</i></p>	 <p><i>Complex Head Support Systems</i></p>
E0960: Wheelchair accessory, shoulder harness/straps or chest strap, including any type mountain hardware	 <p><i>Basic Chest Strap</i></p>	 <p><i>Complex Anterior Trunk Support Systems</i></p>
E0978: Wheelchair accessory, positioning belt/safety, belt/pelvic strap, each	 <p><i>Basic Lap Belt</i></p>	 <p><i>Complex Pelvic Belt</i></p>