

Eligibility criteria for percutaneous medial branch thermal radiofrequency neurotomy – effective from 21 September 2026

Southern Cross will only reimburse the cost of percutaneous medial branch thermal radiofrequency neurotomy under a member's policy when criteria **1, 2 and 3** below are met for that member.

1. The treatment is performed for facet joint mediated pain on the medial branch nerves at any of the following levels:
 - cervical spine levels C2-C8, including the third occipital nerve or
 - lumbar spine levels L1-L5, including L5 dorsal ramus.
2. The member has experienced pain consistent with facet joint pathology for a minimum of six months causing significant functional impairment affecting one or more critical activities of daily living (ie, transferring, walking, dressing, bathing), where appropriate trials of conservative management have failed.
3. The member has had two diagnostic medial branch blocks (MBB), using different local anaesthetic agents only, with both blocks demonstrating greater than or equal to 80% reduction in pain, concordant with the expected duration of the local anaesthetic.

For a repeat neurotomy treatment at the same spinal level, additional diagnostic MBBs are not required where there is documented evidence of a positive response to the initial procedure.

Documentation requirements

All documentation must be retained for audit purposes and include sufficient supporting clinical evidence, such as evidence of conservative management trials, local anaesthetic agents used, and pre and post MBB pain scores that document effect and duration of MBB. Documentation must clearly demonstrate that the eligibility criteria have been met and be available upon request.

The cost of percutaneous medial branch thermal radiofrequency neurotomy will **not** be reimbursed in the following circumstances:

- For percutaneous medial branch thermal radiofrequency neurotomy at any other anatomical site except as described in criteria 1.
- For percutaneous medial branch thermal radiofrequency neurotomy for facet joint pain if it is related to or incurred as a consequence of an ACC approved accident or injury.
- If the member has had more than 2 percutaneous medial branch thermal radiofrequency neurotomy treatment procedures per lifetime.

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Please also ensure you are familiar with all **policy exclusions**, including:

- Acute care
- Congenital conditions
- Cosmetic treatment/procedures
- Health screening
- Treatment of any condition not detrimental to health
- Unapproved healthcare services.

Refer to the relevant policy document for specific conditions and exceptions that apply to these exclusions.