



## Medica Central Medical Policy

**Policy Name:** Synthetic Cartilage Implants (Cartiva SCI) for First Metatarsophalangeal Joint MP9778

**Effective Date:** 09/01/2025

### Important Information – Please Read Before Using This Policy

These services may or may not be covered by all Medica Central plans. Coverage is subject to requirements in applicable federal or state laws. Please refer to the member's plan document for other specific coverage information. If there is a difference between this general information and the member's plan document, the member's plan document will be used to determine coverage. With respect to Medicare, Medicaid, and other government programs, this policy will apply unless these programs require different coverage.

Members may contact Medica Customer Service at the phone number listed on their member identification card to discuss their benefits more specifically. Providers with questions may call the Provider Service Center. Please use the Quick Reference Guide on the Provider Communications page for the appropriate phone number. <https://mo-central.medica.com/Providers/SSM-employee-health-plan-for-IL-MO-OK-providers>

Medica Central coverage policies are not medical advice. Members should consult with appropriate health care providers to obtain needed medical advice, care, and treatment.

### Coverage Policy

Synthetic cartilage implants (Cartiva SCI) for the first metatarsophalangeal joint are investigative and unproven and therefore **NOT COVERED**. There is insufficient reliable evidence in the form of high-quality peer-reviewed medical literature to establish the efficacy or effects on health care outcomes.

### Description

The metatarsophalangeal joint (MTP) is at the base of the big toe and bends every time an individual takes a step. Osteoarthritis of the metatarsophalangeal joint is the most common source of foot pain. This condition is accompanied by loss of protective cartilage in the joint. An individual may experience painful rubbing of the bones in the joint, growth of a bone spur, inflammation, and loss of motion.

Treatment options vary based on the severity of the symptoms and may include conservative management, surgical removal of bone spurs and inflamed tissue, and in severe cases, surgical fusion of the joint.

Alternative treatments to preserve joint motion are being explored. Synthetic cartilage implants replace the damaged cartilage in the toe joint while preserving the majority of the individual's bone and joint motion.

The implant is man-made (synthetic) of a soft plastic-like substance (polyvinyl alcohol) and salt water (saline). These materials are combined and molded into a solid, cylinder-shaped implant. The implant is surgically placed in the joint by exposing the capsule of the MTP joint. The surgeon removes any osteophytes (bone spurs) and then using a drill, creates a small hole in the metatarsal head in which the device is implanted.



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### FDA Approval

On July 01, 2016, the Cartiva SCI (synthetic cartilage implant) received FDA Premarket Approval (P150017) for use in the treatment of patients with degenerative or post-traumatic arthritis in the first metatarsophalangeal (MTP) joint meeting specific clinical criteria.

### Prior Authorization

Prior authorization is not applicable. Claims for this service are subject to retrospective review and denial of coverage, as investigative services are not eligible for reimbursement.

### Coding Considerations

Use the current applicable CPT/HCPCS code(s). The following codes are included below for informational purposes only and are subject to change without notice. Inclusion or exclusion of a code does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement.

### CPT Codes

- **28291** - Hallux rigidus correction with cheilectomy, debridement and capsular release of the first metatarsophalangeal joint; with implant
- **L8641** – Metatarsal joint implant
- **L8642** – Hallux implant

Original Effective Date: 09/01/2024

Re-Review Date(s): 04/17/2025

Administrative Update: 10/21/2024 – administrative update; add Cartiva (SCI)

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