

POLICY TITLE	OPEN AND THORACOSCOPIC APPROACHES TO TREAT ATRIAL FIBRILLATION AND ATRIAL FLUTTER (MAZE AND RELATED PROCEDURES)
POLICY NUMBER	MP-2.083

Original Issue Date (Created):	9/1/2011
Most Recent Review Date (Revised):	7/20/2020
Effective Date:	2/1/2021

[POLICY RATIONALE](#)
[DISCLAIMER](#)
[POLICY HISTORY](#)

[PRODUCT VARIATIONS](#)
[DEFINITIONS](#)
[CODING INFORMATION](#)

[DESCRIPTION/BACKGROUND](#)
[BENEFIT VARIATIONS](#)
[REFERENCES](#)

I. POLICY

The maze or modified maze procedures, performed on a non-beating heart during cardiopulmonary bypass with concomitant cardiac surgery may be considered **medically necessary** for treatment of symptomatic, atrial fibrillation or flutter.

The use of an open maze or modified maze procedure performed on a non-beating heart without structural heart disease during cardiopulmonary bypass without concomitant cardiac surgery may be considered **medically necessary** for treatment of symptomatic, atrial fibrillation or flutter when **EITHER** of the following are met:

- Atrial fibrillation is refractory to at least one class I/III antiarrhythmic drugs, **OR**;
- Atrial fibrillation is refractory to catheter-based therapy having had at least one unsuccessful catheter-based ablation

Hybrid ablation (defined as a combined percutaneous and thoracoscopic approach) and minimally invasive, off-pump maze procedures (i.e., modified maze procedures), including those done via mini-thoracotomy, may be considered **medically necessary** for the treatment of symptomatic persistent atrial fibrillation or flutter when **ALL** below are met:

- Atrial fibrillation is refractory to at least one class I/III antiarrhythmic drugs and/or catheter based therapy, **AND**;
- Both the surgeon and electrophysiologist agree that the procedure is an appropriate treatment

Policy Guidelines

POLICY TITLE	OPEN AND THORACOSCOPIC APPROACHES TO TREAT ATRIAL FIBRILLATION AND ATRIAL FLUTTER (MAZE AND RELATED PROCEDURES)
POLICY NUMBER	MP-2.083

Given the availability of less-invasive alternative approaches in the treatment of atrial fibrillation (AF) performing the maze procedure without concomitant cardiac surgery should rarely be needed.

Published studies on the maze procedure describe patients with drug-resistant AF and atrial flutter as having experienced their arrhythmias for an average of 7 or more years and having unsuccessful results with an average of 5 or more antiarrhythmic medications.

Cross-reference:

MP-1.127 Percutaneous Left-Atrial Appendage Closure Devices for Stroke Prevention in Atrial Fibrillation

II. PRODUCT VARIATIONS

[TOP](#)

This policy is only applicable to certain programs and products administered by Capital BlueCross please see additional information below, and subject to benefit variations as discussed in Section VI below.

*Note** - The Federal Employee Program (FEP) Service Benefit Plan does not have a medical policy related to these services.

III. DESCRIPTION/BACKGROUND

[TOP](#)

Atrial Fibrillation

Atrial Fibrillation (AF) is a supraventricular tachyarrhythmia characterized by disorganized atrial activation with ineffective atrial ejection. The underlying mechanism of AF involves the interplay between electrical triggering events that initiate AF and the myocardial substrate that permits propagation and maintenance of the aberrant electrical circuit. The most common focal trigger of AF appears to be located within the cardiac muscle that extends into the pulmonary veins. The atria are frequently abnormal in patients with AF and demonstrate enlargement or increased conduction time. Atrial flutter is a variant of AF.

Treatment

The first-line treatment for AF usually includes medications to maintain sinus rhythm and/or control the ventricular rate. Antiarrhythmic medications are only partially effective; therefore, medical treatment is not sufficient for many patients. Percutaneous catheter ablation, using endocardial ablation, is an accepted second-line treatment for patients who are not adequately controlled on medications and may also be used as first-line treatment. Catheter ablation is successful in maintaining sinus rhythm for most patients, but long-term recurrences are common

POLICY TITLE	OPEN AND THORACOSCOPIC APPROACHES TO TREAT ATRIAL FIBRILLATION AND ATRIAL FLUTTER (MAZE AND RELATED PROCEDURES)
POLICY NUMBER	MP-2.083

and increase over time. Performed either by open surgical techniques or thoracoscopy, surgical ablation is an alternative approach to percutaneous catheter ablation.

Open Surgical Techniques

The classic Cox maze III procedure is a complex surgical procedure for patients with AF. It involves sequential atriotomy incisions that interrupt the aberrant atrial conduction pathways in the heart. The procedure is also intended to preserve atrial pumping function. It is indicated for patients who do not respond to medical or other surgical antiarrhythmic therapies and is often performed in conjunction with correction of structural cardiac conditions such as valve repair or replacement. This procedure is considered the criterion standard for the surgical treatment of drug-resistant AF, with a success rate of approximately 90%.

The maze procedure entails making incisions in the heart that:

- direct an impulse from the sinoatrial node to the atrioventricular node;
- preserve activation of the entire atrium; and
- block re-entrant impulses responsible for AF or atrial flutter.

The classic Cox maze procedure is performed on a nonbeating heart during cardiopulmonary bypass. Simplification of the maze procedure has evolved with the use of different ablation tools such as microwave, cryotherapy, ultrasound, and radiofrequency energy sources to create the atrial lesions instead of employing the incisional technique used in the classic maze procedure. The Cox maze IV procedure involves the use of radiofrequency energy or cryoablation to create transmural lesions analogous to the lesions created by the “cut-and-sew” maze.

Minimally Invasive (Thoracoscopic) Techniques

Less invasive, transthoracic, endoscopic, off-pump procedures to treat drug-resistant AF have been developed. The evolution of these procedures involves both different surgical approaches and different lesion sets. Alternative surgical approaches include mini-thoracotomy and total thoracoscopy with video assistance. Open thoracotomy and mini-thoracotomy employ cardiopulmonary bypass and open-heart surgery, while thoracoscopic approaches are performed on the beating heart. Thoracoscopic approaches do not enter the heart and use epicardial ablation lesion sets, whereas the open approaches use either the classic “cut-and-sew” approach or endocardial ablation.

Lesion sets may vary independent of the surgical approach, with a tendency toward less extensive lesion sets targeted to areas most likely to be triggers of AF. The most limited lesion sets involve pulmonary vein isolation and exclusion of the left atrial appendage. More extensive lesion sets include linear ablations of the left and/or right atrium and ablation of ganglionic plexi. Some surgeons perform left atrial reduction in cases of left atrial enlargement.

The type of energy used for ablation also varies; radiofrequency energy is most commonly applied. Other energy sources such as cryoablation and high-intensity ultrasound have been used.

POLICY TITLE	OPEN AND THORACOSCOPIC APPROACHES TO TREAT ATRIAL FIBRILLATION AND ATRIAL FLUTTER (MAZE AND RELATED PROCEDURES)
POLICY NUMBER	MP-2.083

For our purposes, the variations on surgical procedures for AF will be combined under the heading of “modified maze” procedures.

Hybrid Techniques

“Hybrid” ablation refers to the use of both thoracoscopic and percutaneous approaches in the same patient. Ablation is performed on the outer surface of the heart (epicardial) via the thoracoscopic approach, and on the inner surface of the heart (endocardial) via the percutaneous approach. The rationale for a hybrid procedure is that a combination of both techniques may result in a complete ablation. Thoracoscopic epicardial ablation is limited by the inability to perform all possible ablation lines because the posterior portions of the heart are not accessible via thoracoscopy. Percutaneous, endoscopic ablation is limited by incomplete ablation lines that often require repeat procedures. By combining both procedures, a full set of ablation lines can be performed, and incomplete ablation lines can be minimized.

The hybrid approach first involves thoracoscopy with epicardial ablation. Following this procedure, an electrophysiologic study is performed percutaneously followed by endocardial ablation as directed by the results of electrophysiology. Most commonly, the electrophysiology study and endocardial ablation are done immediately after the thoracoscopy as part of a single procedure. However, some hybrid approaches perform the electrophysiology study and endocardial ablation on separate days, as directed by the electrophysiology study.

Regulatory Status

Several radiofrequency ablation systems have been cleared for marketing by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration through the 510(k) process for cardiac tissue ablation (product code OCL). Table 1 provides a select list.

Table 1. Radiofrequency Ablation Approved by the Food and Drug Administration

Device	Manufacturer	510(k) Date
Cobra Fusion Ablation System	AtriCure	Feb 2019
Medtronic Cardioblate® System	Medtronic	Jan 2002
Cardima Ablation System	Cardima	Jan 2003
Epicor™ Medical Ablation System	Epicor Medical	Feb 2004
Isolator™ Transpolar™ Pen	AtriCure	Jun 2005
Estech COBRA® Cardiac Electrosurgical Unit	Endoscopic Technologies	Dec 2005
Coolrail™ Linear Pen	AtriCure	Mar 2008
Numeris® Guided Coagulation System with VisiTrax®	nContact Surgical	Feb 2009
EPi-Sense® Guided Coagulation System with VisiTrax®	nContact Surgical	Nov 2012

POLICY TITLE	OPEN AND THORACOSCOPIC APPROACHES TO TREAT ATRIAL FIBRILLATION AND ATRIAL FLUTTER (MAZE AND RELATED PROCEDURES)
POLICY NUMBER	MP-2.083

A number of cryoablation systems, which may be used during cardiac ablation procedures, have also been cleared for marketing, including those in Table 2.

Table 2. Cryoablation Systems Approved by the Food and Drug Administration

Device	Manufacturer	510(k) Date
Cryocare® Cardiac Surgery System	Endocare	Mar 2002
SeedNet™ System	Galil Medical	May 2005
SurgiFrost® XL Surgical CryoAblation System	CryoCath Technologies; now Medtronic	Jul 2006
Isis™ cryosurgical unit	Galil Medical	Mar 2007

IV. RATIONALE

[Top](#)

Summary of Evidence

For individuals who have symptomatic AF or flutter who are undergoing cardiac surgery with bypass who received a Cox maze or a modified maze procedure, the evidence includes several randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and nonrandomized comparative studies, along with systematic reviews of these studies. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, medication use, and treatment-related morbidity. Several small RCTs have provided most of the direct evidence confirming the benefit of a modified maze procedure for patients with AF who are undergoing mitral valve surgery. These trials have established that the addition of a modified maze procedure results in a lower incidence of atrial arrhythmias following surgery, with minimal additional risks. Observational studies have supported these RCT findings. The evidence is sufficient to determine that the technology results in a meaningful improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have symptomatic, drug-resistant AF or flutter who are not undergoing cardiac surgery with bypass who receive minimally invasive, off-pump thoracoscopic maze procedures, and the evidence includes RCTs and observational studies, some of which identify control groups. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, medication use, and treatment-related morbidity. Most of the direct evidence comparing surgical AF ablation with percutaneous catheter ablation comes from one RCT (FAST) that used video-assisted thoracoscopy in patients with antiarrhythmic drug-refractory atrial fibrillation with left atrial dilatation and hypertension, 67% of which had previously failed CA. In FAST, at one year, thoracoscopic ablation had higher success at maintaining sinus rhythm (36.5% for CA and 65.6% for surgical ablation), but also reported higher adverse event rates compared with CA. At 7 years, outcomes were consistently improved with thoracoscopic ablation, but interpretation of those findings is limited by important flaws in study conduct. In contrast, findings from a small single-center RCT in patients with no previous CA suggested no significant benefit with minimally invasive thoracoscopic ablation and more major complications. The case series have generally reported high success rates, and a few

POLICY TITLE	OPEN AND THORACOSCOPIC APPROACHES TO TREAT ATRIAL FIBRILLATION AND ATRIAL FLUTTER (MAZE AND RELATED PROCEDURES)
POLICY NUMBER	MP-2.083

with matched comparison groups have reported higher success rates with surgical treatment than with catheter ablation. However, most series lacked a control group, generally only reported short-term outcomes, and did not consistently report adverse events. Therefore, this evidence does not permit definitive conclusions whether a specific approach is superior to the other. Factors, such as previous treatment, the probability of maintaining sinus rhythm, the risk of complications, contraindications to anticoagulation, and patient preference, may all affect the risk-benefit ratio for each procedure. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

For individuals who have symptomatic, drug-resistant AF or flutter who are not undergoing cardiac surgery with bypass who receive hybrid thoracoscopic and endocardial ablation procedures, the evidence includes a nonrandomized comparative study and single-arm case series. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, medication use, and treatment-related morbidity. The studies have suggested that hybrid ablation procedures are associated with high rates of freedom from AF, but direct comparisons with catheter ablation are lacking. Comparative studies are needed to permit direct comparisons of the benefits and harms of hybrid ablation procedures with alternatives. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

V. DEFINITIONS

[TOP](#)

ATRIAL FLUTTER is a cardiac arrhythmia marked by rapid (about three hundred beats per minute) regular atrial beating, and, usually, a regular ventricular response.

ATRIOVENTRICULAR (AV) NODE is an area of specialized cardiac muscle that receives the cardiac impulse from the sinoatrial (SA) node and conducts it to the AV bundle and then to the Purkinje fibers and the walls of the ventricles. The AV node is located in the septal wall between the left and right atria.

ATRIUM is the upper chamber of each half of the heart. Atria is the plural of atrium.

MYOCARDIUM is the middle layer of the walls of the heart, composed of cardiac muscle.

SINOATRIAL (SA) NODE is a specialized group of cardiac muscle cells in the wall of the right atrium at the entrance to the superior vena cava. These cells depolarize spontaneously and rhythmically to initiate normal heartbeats.

SUPRAVENTRICULAR TACHYCARDIA (SVT) is any cardiac rhythm with a rate exceeding one hundred (100) beats per minute that originates above the branching part of the atrioventricular bundle, that is, in the sinus node, atria, or AV junction.

POLICY TITLE	OPEN AND THORACOSCOPIC APPROACHES TO TREAT ATRIAL FIBRILLATION AND ATRIAL FLUTTER (MAZE AND RELATED PROCEDURES)
POLICY NUMBER	MP-2.083

TACHYCARDIA is an abnormally rapid heart rate, greater than one hundred (100) beats per minute.

VI. BENEFIT VARIATIONS

[Top](#)

The existence of this medical policy does not mean that this service is a covered benefit under the member's health benefit plan. Benefit determinations should be based in all cases on the applicable health benefit plan language. Medical policies do not constitute a description of benefits. A member's health benefit plan governs which services are covered, which are excluded, which are subject to benefit limits and which require preauthorization. There are different benefit plan designs in each product administered by Capital BlueCross. Members and providers should consult the member's health benefit plan for information or contact Capital BlueCross for benefit information.

VII. DISCLAIMER

[Top](#)

Capital BlueCross's medical policies are developed to assist in administering a member's benefits, do not constitute medical advice and are subject to change. Treating providers are solely responsible for medical advice and treatment of members. Members should discuss any medical policy related to their coverage or condition with their provider and consult their benefit information to determine if the service is covered. If there is a discrepancy between this medical policy and a member's benefit information, the benefit information will govern. If a provider or a member has a question concerning the application of this medical policy to a specific member's plan of benefits, please contact Capital BlueCross' Provider Services or Member Services. Capital BlueCross considers the information contained in this medical policy to be proprietary and it may only be disseminated as permitted by law.

VIII. CODING INFORMATION

[Top](#)

Note: This list of codes may not be all-inclusive, and codes are subject to change at any time. The identification of a code in this section does not denote coverage as coverage is determined by the terms of member benefit information. In addition, not all covered services are eligible for separate reimbursement.

Covered when medically necessary:

CPT Codes®							
33254	33255	33256	33257	33258	33259	33265	33266

Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) copyrighted by American Medical Association. All Rights Reserved.

ICD-10-CM Diagnosis Codes	Description
I48.0	Paroxysmal atrial fibrillation

POLICY TITLE	OPEN AND THORACOSCOPIC APPROACHES TO TREAT ATRIAL FIBRILLATION AND ATRIAL FLUTTER (MAZE AND RELATED PROCEDURES)
POLICY NUMBER	MP-2.083

ICD-10-CM Diagnosis Codes	Description
I48.1	Persistent atrial fibrillation
I48.11	Longstanding persistent atrial fibrillation
I48.19	Other persistent atrial fibrillation
I48.20	Chronic atrial fibrillation, unspecified
I48.21	Permanent atrial fibrillation
I48.3	Typical atrial flutter
I48.4	Atypical atrial flutter

IX. REFERENCES

[Top](#)

1. Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association Technology Evaluation Center (TEC). Maze procedure for drug-resistant atrial fibrillation or flutter. TEC Assessments. 1994;Volume 9:Tab 19.
2. Khargi K, Hutten BA, Lemke B, et al. Surgical treatment of atrial fibrillation; a systematic review. *Eur J Cardiothorac Surg.* Feb 2005;27(2):258-265. PMID 15691679
3. Topkara VK, Williams MR, Barili F, et al. Radiofrequency and microwave energy sources in surgical ablation of atrial fibrillation: a comparative analysis. *Heart Surg Forum.* 2006;9(3):E614-617. PMID 16687343
4. Stulak JM, Dearani JA, Sundt TM, 3rd, et al. Superiority of cut-and-sew technique for the Cox maze procedure: comparison with radiofrequency ablation. *J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg.* Apr 2007;133(4):1022-1027. PMID 17382646
5. Huffman MD, Karmali KN, Berendsen MA, et al. Concomitant atrial fibrillation surgery for people undergoing cardiac surgery. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev.* Aug 22 2016(8):CD011814. PMID 27551927
6. Phan K, Xie A, Tian DH, et al. Systematic review and meta-analysis of surgical ablation for atrial fibrillation during mitral valve surgery. *Ann Cardiothorac Surg.* Jan 2014;3(1):3-14. PMID 24516793
7. Gillinov AM, Gelijns AC, Parides MK, et al. Surgical ablation of atrial fibrillation during mitral-valve surgery. *N Engl J Med.* Apr 9 2015;372(15):1399-1409. PMID 25853744
8. Budera P, Straka Z, Osmancik P, et al. Comparison of cardiac surgery with left atrial surgical ablation vs. cardiac surgery without atrial ablation in patients with coronary and/or valvular heart disease plus atrial fibrillation: final Procedures) results of the PRAGUE-12 randomized multicentre study. *Eur Heart J.* Nov 2012;33(21):2644-2652. PMID 22930458

POLICY TITLE	OPEN AND THORACOSCOPIC APPROACHES TO TREAT ATRIAL FIBRILLATION AND ATRIAL FLUTTER (MAZE AND RELATED PROCEDURES)
POLICY NUMBER	MP-2.083

9. Van Breugel HN, Nieman FH, Accord RE, et al. A prospective randomized multicenter comparison on health- related quality of life: the value of add-on arrhythmia surgery in patients with paroxysmal, permanent or persistent atrial fibrillation undergoing valvular and/or coronary bypass surgery. *J Cardiovasc Electrophysiol*. May 2010;21(5):511-520. PMID 19925605
10. Saint LL, Damiano RJ, Jr., Cuculich PS, et al. Incremental risk of the Cox-maze IV procedure for patients with atrial fibrillation undergoing mitral valve surgery. *J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg*. Nov 2013;146(5):1072-1077. PMID 23998785
11. Kim KC, Cho KR, Kim YJ, et al. Long-term results of the Cox-Maze III procedure for persistent atrial fibrillation associated with rheumatic mitral valve disease: 10-year experience. *Eur J Cardiothorac Surg*. Feb 2007;31(2):261-266. PMID 17158057
12. Damiano RJ, Jr., Badhwar V, Acker MA, et al. The CURE-AF trial: a prospective, multicenter trial of irrigated radiofrequency ablation for the treatment of persistent atrial fibrillation during concomitant cardiac surgery. *Heart Rhythm*. Jan 2014;11(1):39-45. PMID 24184028
13. Gaita F, Ebrille E, Scaglione M, et al. Very long-term results of surgical and transcatheter ablation of long- standing persistent atrial fibrillation. *Ann Thorac Surg*. Oct 2013;96(4):1273-1278. PMID 23915587
14. Watkins AC, Young CA, Ghoreishi M, et al. Prospective assessment of the CryoMaze procedure with continuous outpatient telemetry in 136 patients. *Ann Thorac Surg*. Apr 2014;97(4):1191-1198; discussion 1198. PMID 24582049
15. van Laar C, Kelder J, van Putte BP. The totally thoracoscopic maze procedure for the treatment of atrial fibrillation. *Interact Cardiovasc Thorac Surg*. Jan 2017;24(1):102-111. PMID 27664426
16. Phan K, Phan S, Thiagalingam A, et al. Thoracoscopic surgical ablation versus catheter ablation for atrial fibrillation. *Eur J Cardiothorac Surg*. Apr 2016;49(4):1044-1051. PMID 26003961
17. La Meir M, Gelsomino S, Luca F, et al. Minimal invasive surgery for atrial fibrillation: an updated review. *Europace*. Feb 2013;15(2):170-182. PMID 22782971
18. Boersma LV, Castella M, van Boven W, et al. Atrial fibrillation catheter ablation versus surgical ablation treatment (FAST): a 2-center randomized clinical trial. *Circulation*. Jan 3 2012;125(1):23-30. PMID 22082673
19. Pokushalov E, Romanov A, Elesin D, et al. Catheter versus surgical ablation of atrial fibrillation after a failed initial pulmonary vein isolation procedure: a randomized controlled trial. *J Cardiovasc Electrophysiol*. Dec 2013;24(12):1338-1343. PMID 24016147
20. Stulak JM, Dearani JA, Sundt TM, 3rd, et al. Ablation of atrial fibrillation: comparison of catheter-based techniques and the Cox-Maze III operation. *Ann Thorac Surg*. Jun 2011;91(6):1882-1888; discussion 1888-1889. PMID 21619987

POLICY TITLE	OPEN AND THORACOSCOPIC APPROACHES TO TREAT ATRIAL FIBRILLATION AND ATRIAL FLUTTER (MAZE AND RELATED PROCEDURES)
POLICY NUMBER	MP-2.083

21. Wang J, Li Y, Shi J, et al. Minimally invasive surgical versus catheter ablation for the long-lasting persistent atrial fibrillation. *PLoS One*. Jul 2011;6(7):e22122. PMID 21765943
22. Lawrance CP, Henn MC, Miller JR, et al. A minimally invasive Cox maze IV procedure is as effective as sternotomy while decreasing major morbidity and hospital stay. *J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg*. Sep 2014;148(3):955- 961; discussion 962-952. PMID 25048635
23. Massimiano PS, Yanagawa B, Henry L, et al. Minimally invasive fibrillating heart surgery: a safe and effective approach for mitral valve and surgical ablation for atrial fibrillation. *Ann Thorac Surg*. Aug 2013;96(2):520-527. PMID 23773732
24. Cui YQ, Li Y, Gao F, et al. Video-assisted minimally invasive surgery for lone atrial fibrillation: a clinical report of 81 cases. *J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg*. Feb 2010;139(2):326-332. PMID 19660413
25. Edgerton JR, Brinkman WT, Weaver T, et al. Pulmonary vein isolation and autonomic denervation for the management of paroxysmal atrial fibrillation by a minimally invasive surgical approach. *J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg*. Oct 2010;140(4):823-828. PMID 20299028
26. Han FT, Kasirajan V, Kowalski M, et al. Results of a minimally invasive surgical pulmonary vein isolation and ganglionic plexi ablation for atrial fibrillation: single-center experience with 12-month follow-up. *Circ Arrhythm Electrophysiol*. Aug 2009;2(4):370-377. PMID 19808492
27. Pruitt JC, Lazzara RR, Ebra G. Minimally invasive surgical ablation of atrial fibrillation: the thoracoscopic box lesion approach. *J Interv Card Electrophysiol*. Dec 2007;20(3):83-87. PMID 18214660
28. Sirak J, Jones D, Sun B, et al. Toward a definitive, totally thoracoscopic procedure for atrial fibrillation. *Ann Thorac Surg*. Dec 2008;86(6):1960-1964. PMID 19022018
29. Speziale G, Bonifazi R, Nasso G, et al. Minimally invasive radiofrequency ablation of lone atrial fibrillation by monolateral right minithoracotomy: operative and early follow-up results. *Ann Thorac Surg*. Jul 2010;90(1):161- 167. PMID 20609767
30. Wudel JH, Chaudhuri P, Hiller JJ. Video-assisted epicardial ablation and left atrial appendage exclusion for atrial fibrillation: extended follow-up. *Ann Thorac Surg*. Jan 2008;85(1):34-38. PMID 18154774
31. Yilmaz A, Geuzebroek GS, Van Putte BP, et al. Completely thoracoscopic pulmonary vein isolation with ganglionic plexus ablation and left atrial appendage amputation for treatment of atrial fibrillation. *Eur J Cardiothorac Surg*. Sep 2010;38(3):356-360. PMID 20227287
32. Yilmaz A, Van Putte BP, Van Boven WJ. Completely thoracoscopic bilateral pulmonary vein isolation and left atrial appendage exclusion for atrial fibrillation. *J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg*. Aug 2008;136(2):521-522. PMID 18692667
33. Geuzebroek GS, Bentala M, Molhoek SG, et al. Totally thoracoscopic left atrial Maze: standardized, effective and safe. *Interact Cardiovasc Thorac Surg*. Mar 2016;22(3):259-264. PMID 26705300

POLICY TITLE	OPEN AND THORACOSCOPIC APPROACHES TO TREAT ATRIAL FIBRILLATION AND ATRIAL FLUTTER (MAZE AND RELATED PROCEDURES)
POLICY NUMBER	MP-2.083

34. Je HG, Shuman DJ, Ad N. A systematic review of minimally invasive surgical treatment for atrial fibrillation: a comparison of the Cox-Maze procedure, beating-heart epicardial ablation, and the hybrid procedure on safety and efficacy. *Eur J Cardiothorac Surg.* Oct 2015;48(4):531-540; discussion 540-531. PMID 25567961
35. La Meir M, Gelsomino S, Luca F, et al. Minimally invasive surgical treatment of lone atrial fibrillation: Early results of hybrid versus standard minimally invasive approach employing radiofrequency sources. *Int J Cardiol.* May 2 2012;167(4):1469-1475. PMID 22560495
36. Bisleri G, Rosati F, Bontempi L, et al. Hybrid approach for the treatment of long-standing persistent atrial fibrillation: electrophysiological findings and clinical results. *Eur J Cardiothorac Surg.* Nov 2013;44(5):919-923. PMID 23475587
37. Gehi AK, Mounsey JP, Pursell I, et al. Hybrid epicardial-endocardial ablation using a pericardioscopic technique for the treatment of atrial fibrillation. *Heart Rhythm.* Jan 2013;10(1):22-28. PMID 23064043
38. Gersak B, Pernat A, Robic B, et al. Low rate of atrial fibrillation recurrence verified by implantable loop recorder monitoring following a convergent epicardial and endocardial ablation of atrial fibrillation. *J Cardiovasc Electrophysiol.* Oct 2012;23(10):1059-1066. PMID 22587585
39. La Meir M, Gelsomino S, Lorusso R, et al. The hybrid approach for the surgical treatment of lone atrial fibrillation: one-year results employing a monopolar radiofrequency source. *J Cardiothorac Surg.* Jul 19 2012;7:71. PMID 22812613
40. Muneretto C, Bisleri G, Bontempi L, et al. Successful treatment of lone persistent atrial fibrillation by means of a hybrid thoracoscopic-transcatheter approach. *Innovations (Phila).* Jul-Aug 2012;7(4):254-258. PMID 23123991
41. Muneretto C, Bisleri G, Bontempi L, et al. Durable staged hybrid ablation with thoracoscopic and percutaneous approach for treatment of long-standing atrial fibrillation: a 30-month assessment with continuous monitoring. *J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg.* Dec 2012;144(6):1460-1465; discussion 1465. PMID 23062968
42. Pison L, La Meir M, van Opstal J, et al. Hybrid thoracoscopic surgical and transvenous catheter ablation of atrial fibrillation. *J Am Coll Cardiol.* Jul 3 2012;60(1):54-61. PMID 22742400
43. Zembala M, Filipiak K, Kowalski O, et al. Minimally invasive hybrid ablation procedure for the treatment of persistent atrial fibrillation: one year results. *Kardiol Pol.* Aug 2012;70(8):819-828. PMID 22933215
44. Gersak B, Zembala MO, Muller D, et al. European experience of the convergent atrial fibrillation procedure: multicenter outcomes in consecutive patients. *J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg.* Apr 2014;147(4):1411-1416. PMID 23988287

POLICY TITLE	OPEN AND THORACOSCOPIC APPROACHES TO TREAT ATRIAL FIBRILLATION AND ATRIAL FLUTTER (MAZE AND RELATED PROCEDURES)
POLICY NUMBER	MP-2.083

45. Civello KC, Smith CA, Boedefeld W. Combined endocardial and epicardial ablation for symptomatic atrial fibrillation: single center experience in 100+ consecutive patients. *J Innovations Cardiac Rhythm Manage.* 2013;August
46. Badhwar V, Rankin JS, Damiano RJ, Jr., et al. The Society of Thoracic Surgeons 2017 Clinical practice guidelines for the surgical treatment of atrial fibrillation. *Ann Thorac Surg.* Jan 2017;103(1):329-341. PMID 28007240
47. January CT, Wann LS, Calkins H, et al. 2019 AHA/ACC/HRS Focused Update of the 2014 AHA/ACC/HRS Guideline for the Management of Patients With Atrial Fibrillation: A Report of the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association Task Force on Clinical Practice Guidelines and the Heart Rhythm Society. *J Am Coll Cardiol.* 2019 Jan 21. PMID: 30703431
48. Calkins H, Hindricks G, Cappato R, et al. 2017 HRS/EHRA/ECAS/APHRS/SOLAECE expert consensus statement on catheter and surgical ablation of atrial fibrillation. *Europace.* 2018 Jan 1;20(1):e1-e160. PMID: 29016840
49. Ad N, Damiano RJ Jr, Badhwar V, et al. Expert consensus guidelines: Examining surgical ablation for atrial fibrillation. *J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg.* 2017 Jun;153(6):1330-1354.e1. PMID: 28390766
50. Pag P, CCS Atrial Fibrillation Guidelines Committee. Canadian Cardiovascular Society atrial fibrillation guidelines 2010: surgical therapy. *Can J Cardiol.* Jan-Feb 2011;27(1):67-73. PMID 21329864
51. Skanes AC, Healey JS, Cairns JA, et al. Focused 2012 update of the Canadian Cardiovascular Society atrial fibrillation guidelines: recommendations for stroke prevention and rate/rhythm control. *Can J Cardiol.* Mar-Apr 2012;28(2):125-136. PMID 22433576
52. Zhang D, Shi J, Quan H, et al. Five-year results of a modified left atrial maze IV procedure in the treatment of atrial fibrillation: a randomized study. *ANZ J Surg.* Apr 2020; 90(4): 602-607. PMID 31742849
53. Castella M, Kotecha D, van Laar C, et al. Thoracoscopic vs. catheter ablation for atrial fibrillation: long-term follow-up of the FAST randomized trial. *Europace.* May 01 2019; 21(5): 746-753. PMID 30715255
54. Adiyaman A, Buist TJ, Beukema RJ, et al. Randomized Controlled Trial of Surgical Versus Catheter Ablation for Paroxysmal and Early Persistent Atrial Fibrillation. *Circ Arrhythm Electrophysiol.* Oct 2018; 11(10): e006182. PMID 30354411
55. Vos LM, Bentala M, Geuzebroek GS, et al. Long-term outcome after totally thoracoscopic ablation for atrial fibrillation. *J Cardiovasc Electrophysiol.* Jan 2020; 31(1): 40-45. PMID 31691391
56. Providência R, Barra S, Pinto C, Paiva L, Nascimento J. Surgery for Atrial Fibrillation: Selecting the Procedure for the Patient. *J Atr Fibrillation.* 2013;6(1):743. PMID 28496848

MEDICAL POLICY

POLICY TITLE	OPEN AND THORACOSCOPIC APPROACHES TO TREAT ATRIAL FIBRILLATION AND ATRIAL FLUTTER (MAZE AND RELATED PROCEDURES)
POLICY NUMBER	MP-2.083

57. Harky A, Bithas C, Chan JSK, Snosi M, Pousios D, Muir AD. Surgical Treatment of Atrial Fibrillation: Cutting Through the Edges. *Braz J Cardiovasc Surg.* 2020 Jun 1;35(3):375-386. PMID 32549109

58. Badhwar V et al. The Society of Thoracic Surgeons 2017 Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Surgical Treatment of Atrial Fibrillation. *Ann Thorac Surg* 2017;103:329–41

59. Khojnejhad A, Ellenbogen K, Al-Atassi T, et al. Hybrid Atrial Fibrillation Ablation. Current Status and A Look Ahead. *Circulation: Arrhythmia and Electrophysiology.* 2017;10:e005263. <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/CIRCEP.117.005263>. Accessed July 23, 2020

60. Muneretto C, Bisleri G, Rosati F, et al. European prospective multicentre study of hybrid thoracoscopic and transcatheter ablation of persistent atrial fibrillation: the HISTORIC-AF trial. *European Journal of Cardio-Thoracic Surgery, Volume 52, Issue 4, October 2017, Pages 740–745,* <https://doi.org/10.1093/ejcts/ezx162>. Accessed July 23, 2020

61. Calkins H, Hindricks G, Cappato R, et al. 2017 HRS/EHRA/ECAS/APHRS/SOLAECE expert consensus statement on catheter and surgical ablation of atrial fibrillation. *Heart Rhythm.* 2017;14(10):e275-e444. doi:10.1016/j.hrthm.2017.05.012

62. Je HG, Shuman DJ, Ad N. A systematic review of minimally invasive surgical treatment for atrial fibrillation: a comparison of the Cox-Maze procedure, beating-heart epicardial ablation, and the hybrid procedure on safety and efficacy. *Eur J Cardiothorac Surg* 2015;48:531–41.

63. Ad N, Holmes S, Friehling T. Minimally Invasive Stand-Alone Cox Maze Procedure for Persistent and Longs-Standing Persistent Atrial Fibrillation. *Circulation: Arrhythmia and Electrophysiology.* 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1161/CIRCEP.117.005352>. Accessed July 23, 2020

64. Blue Cross Blue Shield Association Medical Policy Reference Manual. 7.01.14, Open and Thoracoscopic Approaches to Treat Atrial Fibrillation and Atrial Flutter (Maze and Related Procedures). June 2020.

X. POLICY HISTORY

[Top](#)

MP-2.083	CAC 4/26/11 Adopted BCBSA. Information regarding open and thoracoscopic approaches to treat atrial fibrillation (Maze and related procedures) removed from MP-2.067 and created in this separate policy. Maze procedure was previously considered on a “case-by-case” basis. Now considered “medically necessary”. Minimally invasive, off-pump procedures remain “investigational”.
	CAC 4/24/12 Consensus. Background/Description revised per BCBSA. No change to policy statement.

POLICY TITLE	OPEN AND THORACOSCOPIC APPROACHES TO TREAT ATRIAL FIBRILLATION AND ATRIAL FLUTTER (MAZE AND RELATED PROCEDURES)
POLICY NUMBER	MP-2.083

	7/23/13 Administrative update. coding review complete
	CAC 9/24/13 Consensus review. References updated but no changes to the policy statements. Rationale added. FEP variation revised to refer to the FEP medical policy manual.
	CAC 9/30/14 Consensus review. References and rationale updated. No changes to the policy statements. Policy coded.
	CAC 9/29/15 Minor review. The phrase “without concomitant cardiac surgery” was removed from the medical necessary policy statement for maze or modified maze during cardiopulmonary bypass. Added statement indicating Maze procedure completed without concurrent cardiac surgery is not medically necessary. Added “Atrial Flutter” to title. Coding reviewed and un-ranged.
	CAC 11/29/16 Consensus review. No changes to the policy statements. References and rationale updated. Variations reformatted. Coding reviewed.
	CAC 9/26/17 Minor revision. “Drug resistant” removed from both the medically necessary statement and the not medically necessary policy statements. Background, rationale, and references updated. Coding reviewed.
	6/22/18 Consensus review. Policy statements unchanged. Description/Background, Rationale and Reference sections updated.
	6/12/19 Consensus review. No change to policy statements. Description/Background and rationale summary reviewed. References updated.
	10/01/19 New 2019 ICD10 codes added to policy.
	5/28/20 Language revised under Product Variations, Benefit Variations and Disclaimer section.
	7/20/20 Minor review. Changed “Open Maze or modified maze procedure on a non-beating heart during cardiopulmonary bypass without concomitant cardiac surgery”, “Hybrid ablation” and “Minimally invasive, off pump maze procedure” from investigational to medically necessary with criteria to align with The Society of Thoracic Surgeons 2017 Clinical Practice Guidelines. Description, Background and Rationale updated. References added.

[TOP](#)

Health care benefit programs issued or administered by Capital BlueCross and/or its subsidiaries, Capital Advantage Insurance Company®, Capital Advantage Assurance Company® and Keystone Health Plan® Central. Independent licensees of the BlueCross BlueShield Association. Communications issued by Capital BlueCross in its capacity as administrator of programs and provider relations for all companies.