

**This coverage decision is expired as of November 1, 2023, and is superseded by a new [payment policy on LLLT](#). Effective November 1, 2023, the modality is a covered benefit when performed in a clinical setting.**

## **Low level laser therapy (also known as cold laser)**

**Coverage decision: Not Covered (Re-review date: January 30, 2018)**

Low level laser therapy (LLLT) involves the application of light from a low-intensity laser at a single wavelength to the affected areas. Athletic trainers, chiropractors, practitioners of alternative medicines, and physical therapists have used LLLT to treat a variety of musculoskeletal disorders. Indications include carpal tunnel syndrome, joint disorders and tendinopathies, lateral and medial epicondylitis, osteoarthritis, low back pain, and ankle sprains.

LLLT emits no heat, sound, or vibration. Instead of producing a thermal effect, LLLT is believed to act via photochemical reactions in the cells, also referred to as photobiology or biostimulation. LLLT devices include gallium arsenide (GaAs), a gallium aluminum arsenide infrared semiconductor (GaAlAs), and helium neon (HeNe) lasers.

LLLT has not been a covered procedure since L&I's original technology assessment in 2004. It remains non-covered, as the most recent literature review on LLLT for musculoskeletal disorders (done in January 2018) did not provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate effectiveness.

## **Technology Assessment**

[Low Level Laser Therapy \(LLLT\) Technology Assessment \(2004\)](#)

[Low Level Laser Therapy \(LLLT\) Technology Assessment Update \(January 2018\)](#)

## **Regulatory authority and related information**

- [RCW 51.08.100](#)
- [RCW 51.08.140](#)
- [WAC 296-20-02700 to 296-20-02850](#)