Coverage Summary

Extracorporeal Photopheresis

Policy Number: E-004  Products: UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage Plans  Original Approval Date: 02/26/2008
Approved by: UnitedHealthcare Medicare Benefit Interpretation Committee  Last Review Date: 05/14/2019

Related Medicare Advantage Policy Guideline: Extracorporeal Photopheresis (NCD 110.4)

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The benefit information in this Coverage Summary is based on existing national coverage policy, however, Local Coverage Determinations (LCDs) may exist and compliance with these policies are required where applicable.

There are instances where this document may direct readers to a UnitedHealthcare Commercial Medical Policy, Medical Benefit Drug Policy, and/or Coverage Determination Guideline (CDG). In the absence of a Medicare National Coverage Determination (NCD), Local Coverage Determination (LCD), or other Medicare coverage guidance, CMS allows a Medicare Advantage Organization (MAO) to create its own coverage determinations, using objective evidence-based rationale relying on authoritative evidence (Medicare IOM Pub. No. 100-16, Ch. 4, §90.5).

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I.  COVERAGE

Coverage Statement: Extracorporeal photopheresis (also known as extracorporeal photochemotherapy) is covered when Medicare criteria are met.

Guidelines/Notes:

1. Extracorporeal photopheresis is covered for the following:
   a. Palliative treatment of skin manifestations of CTCL (cutaneous T-cell lymphoma) that has not responded to other therapy (effective April 8, 1988)
   b. Patients with acute cardiac allograft rejection whose disease is refractory to standard immunosuppressive drug treatment (effective December 19, 2006); and
   c. Patients with chronic graft versus host disease whose disease is refractory to standard immunosuppressive drug treatment (effective December 19, 2006).

   See the NCD for Extracorporeal Photopheresis (110.4) (Accessed May 2, 2019)

2. Treatment of bronchiolitis obliterans syndrome (BOS)
Effective April 30, 2012, Medicare also provides coverage for extracorporeal photopheresis for the treatment of bronchiolitis obliterans syndrome (BOS) following lung allograft transplantation only when extracorporeal photopheresis is provided that meets the criteria outlined in the NCD for Extracorporeal Photopheresis (110.4). (Accessed May 2, 2019)


For payment rules for NCDs requiring CED; see the Coverage Summary for Experimental Procedures and Items, Investigational Devices and Clinical Trials.

Also see the CMS Transmittal 2551 (Change Request 7806) Extracorporeal Photopheresis (ICD-10: September 24, 2012). (Accessed May 2, 2019)


3. Extracorporeal photopheresis is not covered for the treatment of bullous pemphigoid and pemphigus vulgaris and all other indications unless specified above. See the NCD for Extracorporeal Photopheresis (110.4). (Accessed May 2, 2019)

Note: Today extracorporeal photopheresis is commonly administered via the UVAR® XTS™ system, which is an FDA-approved wholly-contained, automated processing system manufactured by Therakos, Inc. This system is a single unit that handles the collection of the patient’s blood, the isolation of the white blood cells, and the ex vivo administration of 8-MOP and UVA. The UVAR® XTS™ system evolved from the FDA-approved UVAR® system, which used the oral formulation of 8-MOP. Other systems and protocols have been used to administer extracorporeal photopheresis; however, in the National Coverage Decision Memorandum for Extracorporeal Photopheresis dated December 19, 2006, CMS evaluated the extracorporeal photopheresis procedure, and not a specific system for administering extracorporeal photopheresis. (Accessed May 2, 2019)

II. DEFINITIONS

Extracorporeal Photopheresis: A medical procedure in which a patient's white blood cells are exposed first to a drug called 8-methoxypsoralen (8-MOP) and then to ultraviolet A (UVA) light. The procedure starts with the removal of the patient's blood, which is centrifuged to isolate the white blood cells. The drug is typically administered directly to the white blood cells after they have been removed from the patient (referred to as ex vivo administration) but the drug can alternatively be administered directly to the patient before the white blood cells are withdrawn. After UVA light exposure, the treated white blood cells are then re-infused into the patient. NCD for Extracorporeal Photopheresis (110.4). (Accessed May 2, 2019)

III. REFERENCES

See above
IV. REVISION HISTORY

05/14/2019  Definitions
  • Revised definition of “Extracorporeal Photopheresis”