



Drug Coverage Policy

Effective Date.....12/01/2024

Coverage Policy Number.....IP0254

Policy Title.....Avonex

Multiple Sclerosis – Avonex

- Avonex® (interferon beta-1a intramuscular injection – Biogen)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

The following Coverage Policy applies to health benefit plans administered by Cigna Companies. Certain Cigna Companies and/or lines of business only provide utilization review services to clients and do not make coverage determinations. References to standard benefit plan language and coverage determinations do not apply to those clients. Coverage Policies are intended to provide guidance in interpreting certain standard benefit plans administered by Cigna Companies. Please note, the terms of a customer's particular benefit plan document [Group Service Agreement, Evidence of Coverage, Certificate of Coverage, Summary Plan Description (SPD) or similar plan document] may differ significantly from the standard benefit plans upon which these Coverage Policies are based. For example, a customer's benefit plan document may contain a specific exclusion related to a topic addressed in a Coverage Policy. In the event of a conflict, a customer's benefit plan document always supersedes the information in the Coverage Policies. In the absence of a controlling federal or state coverage mandate, benefits are ultimately determined by the terms of the applicable benefit plan document. Coverage determinations in each specific instance require consideration of 1) the terms of the applicable benefit plan document in effect on the date of service; 2) any applicable laws/regulations; 3) any relevant collateral source materials including Coverage Policies and; 4) the specific facts of the particular situation. Each coverage request should be reviewed on its own merits. Medical directors are expected to exercise clinical judgment and have discretion in making individual coverage determinations. Coverage Policies relate exclusively to the administration of health benefit plans. Coverage Policies are not recommendations for treatment and should never be used as treatment guidelines. In certain markets, delegated vendor guidelines may be used to support medical necessity and other coverage determinations.

Cigna Healthcare Coverage Policy

OVERVIEW

Avonex is indicated for the treatment of patients with relapsing forms of **multiple sclerosis** (MS) to include clinically isolated syndrome, relapsing remitting disease, and active secondary progressive disease in adults.¹

Disease Overview

MS is a chronic, inflammatory, demyelinating, autoimmune disease of the central nervous system (CNS) that impacts almost 1,000,000 people in the US.²⁻⁴ The condition is marked by inflammation and demyelination, as well as degenerative alterations. Patients usually experience

relapses and remissions in their neurological symptoms. For most patients, the onset of MS symptoms occurs when patients are 20 to 40 years of age; however, children can get MS and new onset disease can occur in older adults. The MS disease course is heterogeneous but has some patterns. Approximately 85% to 90% of patients have a relapsing pattern at onset. However, this transitions over time in patients who are untreated to a worsening with very few or no relapses or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) activity (secondary progressive MS). Around 10% to 15% of patients have a steady progression of symptoms over time (primary progressive MS), marked by some clinical manifestations or by MRI activity. Primary progressive MS is generally diagnosed in patients on the upper level of the typical age range (e.g., almost 40 years of age) and the distribution is equivalent among the two genders. Advances in the understanding of the MS disease process, as well as in MRI technology, spurred updated disease course descriptions in 2013,⁵ as well as in 2017.⁶ The revised disease courses are clinically isolated syndrome, relapsing remitting MS, primary progressive MS, and secondary progressive MS.²⁻⁶ Clinically isolated syndrome is now more recognized among the course descriptions of MS. It is the first clinical presentation of MS that displays characteristics of inflammatory demyelination that may possibly be MS but has yet to fulfill diagnostic criteria. It is notable that the other MS designations can be further characterized considering whether patients have active disease (or not active), as well as if disease is worsening or stable. Disability in MS is commonly graded on the deterioration of mobility per the Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS) an ordinal scale that ranges from 0 to 10, with higher scores indicating greater disability.

Guidelines

In September 2019, a consensus paper was updated by the MS Coalition that discusses the use of disease-modifying therapies in MS.² Many options from various disease classes, involving different mechanisms of action and modes of administration, have shown benefits in patients with MS.

Medical Necessity Criteria

Documentation: Documentation is required where noted in the criteria. Documentation may include, but not limited to, chart notes, laboratory tests, claims records, and/or other information.

Avonex is considered medically necessary when the following are met:

FDA-Approved Indication

- 1. Multiple Sclerosis.** Approve for the duration noted below if the patient meets one of the following (A or B):
 - A) Initial Therapy.** Approve for 1 year if the patient meets ALL of the following (i, ii and iii):
 - i.** Documentation the patient has a relapsing form of multiple sclerosis; AND
Note: Examples of relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis include clinically isolated syndrome, relapsing remitting disease, and active secondary progressive disease.
 - ii.** Medication is prescribed by or in consultation with a neurologist or a physician who specializes in the treatment of multiple sclerosis; AND
 - iii.** Preferred product criteria is met for the product(s) as listed in the below table(s) [Individual and Family Plans];OR
 - B) Patient is Currently Receiving Avonex for ≥ 1 Year.** Approve for 1 year if the patient meets the following (i, ii, and iii):
 - i.** Documentation the patient has a relapsing form of multiple sclerosis; AND
Note: Examples of relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis include clinically isolated syndrome, relapsing remitting disease, and active secondary progressive disease.
 - ii.** Patient meets one of the following (a or b):

- a) Patient experienced a beneficial clinical response when assessed by at least one objective measure; OR
Note: Examples include stabilization or reduced worsening in disease activity as evaluated by magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) [absence or a decrease in gadolinium enhancing lesions, decrease in the number of new or enlarging T2 lesions]; stabilization or reduced worsening on the Expanded Disability State Scale (EDSS) score; achievement in criteria for No Evidence of Disease Activity-3 (NEDA-3) or NEDA-4; improvement on the fatigue symptom and impact questionnaire-relapsing multiple sclerosis (FSIQ-RMS) scale; reduction or absence of relapses; improvement or maintenance on the six-minute walk test or 12-Item MS Walking Scale; improvement on the Multiple Sclerosis Functional Composite (MSFC) score; and/or attenuation of brain volume loss.
- b) Patient experienced stabilization, slowed progression, or improvement in at least one symptom such as motor function, fatigue, vision, bowel/bladder function, spasticity, walking/gait, or pain/numbness/tingling sensation; AND
- iii. Medication is prescribed by or in consultation with a neurologist or a physician who specializes in the treatment of multiple sclerosis.

Individual and Family Plans:

Product	Criteria
Avonex (interferon beta-1a)	ONE of the following: 1. Documentation of failure, contraindication, or intolerance to dimethyl fumarate (generic for Tecfidera) [may require prior authorization] 2. Currently receiving Avonex

When coverage is available and medically necessary, the dosage, frequency, duration of therapy, and site of care should be reasonable, clinically appropriate, and supported by evidence-based literature and adjusted based upon severity, alternative available treatments, and previous response to therapy.

Receipt of sample product does not satisfy any criteria requirements for coverage.

Conditions Not Covered

Any other use is considered experimental, investigational, or unproven, including the following (this list may not be all inclusive; criteria will be updated as new published data are available):

- 1. Concurrent Use with Other Disease-Modifying Agents Used for Multiple Sclerosis.** These agents are not indicated for use in combination (See [Appendix](#) for examples). Additional data are required to determine if use of disease-modifying multiple sclerosis agents in combination is safe and provides added efficacy.
- 2. Non-Relapsing Forms of Multiple Sclerosis.** The efficacy of Avonex has not been established in patients with non-relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis.¹
Note: An example of a non-relapsing form of multiple sclerosis is primary progressive multiple sclerosis.

References

1. Avonex® intramuscular injection [prescribing information]. Cambridge, MA: Biogen; July 2023.
2. A Consensus Paper by the Multiple Sclerosis Coalition. The use of disease-modifying therapies in multiple sclerosis. September 2019. Available at: http://www.nationalmssociety.org/getmedia/5ca284d3-fc7c-4ba5-b005-ab537d495c3c/DMT_Consensus_MS_Coalition_color. Accessed on November 4, 2023.
3. McGinley MP, Goldschmidt C, Rae-Grant AD. Diagnosis and treatment of multiple sclerosis. A review. *JAMA*. 2021;325(8):765-779.
4. No authors listed. Drugs for multiple sclerosis. *Med Lett Drugs Ther*. 2021;63(1620):42-48.
5. Lublin FD, Reingold SC, Cohen JA, et al. Defining the clinical course of multiple sclerosis: the 2013 revisions. *Neurology*. 2014;83:278-286.
6. Thompson AJ, Banwell BL, Barkhof F, et al. Diagnosis of multiple sclerosis: 2017 revisions of the McDonald criteria. *Lancet Neurol*. 2018;17(2):162-173.

APPENDIX

Medication	Mode of Administration
Aubagio® (teriflunomide tablets, generic)	Oral
Avonex® (interferon beta-1a intramuscular injection)	Injection (self-administered)
Bafiertam® (monomethyl fumarate delayed-release capsules)	Oral
Betaseron® (interferon beta-1b subcutaneous injection)	Injection (self-administered)
Briumvi™ (ublituximab-xij intravenous infusion)	Intravenous infusion
Copaxone® (glatiramer acetate subcutaneous injection, generic)	Injection (self-administered)
Extavia® (interferon beta-1b subcutaneous injection)	Injection (self-administered)
Gilenya® (fingolimod capsules, generic)	Oral
Glatopa® (glatiramer acetate subcutaneous injection)	Injection (self-administered)
Kesimpta® (ofatumumab subcutaneous injection)	Injection (self-administered)
Lemtrada® (alemtuzumab intravenous infusion)	Intravenous infusion
Mavenclad® (cladribine tablets)	Oral
Mayzent® (siponimod tablets)	Oral
Ocrevus® (ocrelizumab intravenous infusion)	Intravenous infusion
Ocrevus Zunovo™ (ocrelizumab and hyaluronidase-ocsq subcutaneous injection)	Subcutaneous Injection (not self-administered)
Plegridy® (peginterferon beta-1a subcutaneous or intramuscular injection)	Injection (self-administered)
Ponvory® (ponesimod tablets)	Oral
Rebif® (interferon beta-1a subcutaneous injection)	Injection (self-administered)
Tascenso ODT® (fingolimod orally disintegrating tablets)	Oral
Tecfidera® (dimethyl fumarate delayed-release capsules, generic)	Oral
Tyruko® (natalizumab-sztn intravenous infusion)	Intravenous infusion
Tysabri® (natalizumab intravenous infusion)	Intravenous infusion
Vumerity® (diroximel fumarate delayed-release capsules)	Oral
Zeposia® (ozanimod capsules)	Oral

Revision Details

Type of Revision	Summary of Changes	Date
Selected Revision	Added a definition for documentation. Added a specialist prescribing requirement. Added criteria for patient Currently Receiving Avonex for ≥ 1 Year. Removed Employer Plans preferred product requirements. Ocrevus Zunovo was added to the Appendix.	12/01/2024

The policy effective date is in force until updated or retired.

"Cigna Companies" refers to operating subsidiaries of The Cigna Group. All products and services are provided exclusively by or through such operating subsidiaries, including Cigna Health and Life Insurance Company, Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, Evernorth Behavioral Health, Inc., Cigna Health Management, Inc., and HMO or service company subsidiaries of The Cigna Group. © 2024 The Cigna Group.