

## Medical Coverage Policy | Lyme Disease Diagnosis and Treatment Mandate



**EFFECTIVE DATE:** 05|01|2005  
**POLICY LAST UPDATED:** 03|05|2019

### OVERVIEW

This policy documents the state-mandated coverage guidelines for certain Lyme disease treatments (Rhode Island General Law 27-20-48).

### MEDICAL CRITERIA

Not applicable

### PRIOR AUTHORIZATION

Prior authorization review is not required.

### POLICY STATEMENT

#### BlueCHiP for Medicare and Commercial Products

In accordance with Rhode Island General Law § 27-20-48, coverage is provided for diagnostic testing and long-term antibiotic treatment of chronic Lyme disease.

**To qualify for payment, services must be ordered by a physician or other qualified healthcare professional after evaluation of symptoms, diagnostic test results, and response to treatment.** Benefit payment for Lyme disease treatment will not be denied solely because such treatment may be characterized as unproven, experimental, or investigational.

### COVERAGE

Benefits may vary between groups/contracts. Please refer to the appropriate Benefit Booklet, Evidence of Coverage, or Subscriber Agreement for applicable benefits/coverage.

Although Rhode Island-mandated benefits generally do not apply to Plan 65, FEHBP, and BlueCHiP for Medicare, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island follows this mandate for all products. Self-funded groups may or may not choose to follow state mandates.

### BACKGROUND

This policy documents the Rhode Island General Law (RIGL) 27-20-48 for certain Lyme disease treatments.

*§ 27-20-48 Mandatory coverage for certain lyme disease treatments. – Every individual or group hospital or medical expense insurance policy or individual or group hospital or medical services plan contract delivered, issued for delivery, or renewed in this state on or after January 1, 2004 shall provide coverage for diagnostic testing and long-term antibiotic treatment of chronic lyme disease when determined to be medically necessary and ordered by a physician acting in accordance with chapter 37.5 of title 5 entitled "lyme disease diagnosis and treatment" after making a thorough evaluation of the patient's symptoms, diagnostic test results and response to treatment. Treatment otherwise eligible for benefits pursuant to this section shall not be denied solely because such treatment may be characterized as unproven, experimental, or investigational in nature.*

Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected blacklegged ticks. Typical symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, and a characteristic skin rash

called erythema migrans. If left untreated, infection can spread to joints, the heart, and the nervous system. Lyme disease is diagnosed based on symptoms, physical findings (e.g., rash), and the possibility of exposure to infected ticks; laboratory testing is helpful if used correctly and performed with validated methods. Most cases of Lyme disease can be treated successfully with antibiotics over a few weeks. Steps to prevent Lyme disease include using insect repellent, removing ticks promptly, applying pesticides, and reducing tick habitat. The ticks that transmit Lyme disease can occasionally transmit other tick-borne diseases as well.

## **CODING**

### **BlueCHiP for Medicare and Commercial Products**

The following CPT codes are used for testing for Lyme disease.

- 86617** Borrelia burgdorferi (Lyme disease) confirmatory test (eg, Western Blot or immunoblot)
- 86618** Borrelia burgdorferi (Lyme disease)
- 0041U** Borrelia burgdorferi, antibody detection of 5 recombinant protein groups, by immunoblot, IgM
- 0042U** Borrelia burgdorferi, antibody detection of 12 recombinant protein groups, by immunoblot, IgG

## **RELATED POLICIES**

Proprietary Laboratory Analyses (PLA)

## **PUBLISHED**

Provider Update, May 2019  
Provider Update, April 2018  
Provider Update, April 2017  
Provider Update, May 2016  
Provider Update, July 2015

## **REFERENCES**

1. Rhode Island General Law (RIGL). 27-20-48 Mandatory coverage for certain lyme disease treatments. <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE27/27-20/27-20-48.HTM>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Lyme Disease. <http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/>

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