

**Medical Coverage Policy |** Injectable Agents for Asthma and Chronic Idiopathic Urticaria –Cinqair, Fasentra, Nucala, Xolair



**EFFECTIVE DATE:** 06|01|2018  
**POLICY LAST UPDATED:** 05|21|2019

## OVERVIEW

This policy documents coverage guidelines required for the use of Xolair (omalizumab), Cinqair (reslizumab), Fasentra (benralizumab) and Nucala (mepolizumab). Omalizumab is a treatment for moderate to severe persistent allergic asthma and chronic idiopathic urticaria (CIU) in appropriate patients. Mepolizumab, reslizumab and benralizumab are treatments for severe asthma in appropriate patients.

This policy is applicable to BlueCHiP for Medicare products only. For Commercial Products, see related policy section.

## MEDICAL CRITERIA

### BlueCHiP for Medicare

#### Xolair® (omalizumab)

Omalizumab is covered for the following uses:

- Moderate to severe persistent asthma for patients 12 years of age or above with who have had a positive skin test or invitro reactivity to a perennial aeroallergen and whose symptoms are inadequately controlled with inhaled corticosteroids.
- Chronic idiopathic urticaria for patients 12 years of age or above who remain symptomatic despite H1 antihistamine treatment
- Latex allergy
- Peanut allergy

## DEFINITIONS

### Moderate persistent asthma

Moderate persistent asthma is defined by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) as:

- Daily symptoms
- Daily use of inhaled short-acting beta 2-agonist
- Some limitation with normal activity
- Exacerbations requiring oral systemic corticosteroids > 2/year
- Nighttime symptoms greater than 1 time a week but not nightly
- FEV1 >60% but <80% predicted
- FEF1/FVC reduced 5%

### Severe persistent asthma

Severe persistent asthma is defined by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) as:

- Symptoms throughout the day
- Use of inhaled short-acting beta 2-agonist several times per day
- Extremely limited normal activity
- Exacerbations requiring oral systemic corticosteroids > 2/year
- Nighttime symptoms often 7x/week
- FEV1 <60% predicted
- FEV1/FVC reduced >5%

NHLBI normal ranges by age for FEV 1/FVC

- 8-19 years of age – 85%;
- 20-39 years of age – 80%;
- 40-59 years of age – 75%;
- 60-80 years of age – 70%.

The presence of one of these features of severity (moderate or severe) is sufficient to place a patient in that category. These clinical features are based on pre-treatment symptoms and measurements.

**Cinqair**<sup>®</sup> (reslizumab)

**Fasenra**<sup>™</sup> (benralizumab)

**Nucala**<sup>®</sup> (mepolizumab)

### Initial Evaluation

**Cinqair** (reslizumab), **Fasenra** (benralizumab), and **Nucala** (mepolizumab) will be approved when ALL of the following are met

1. ONE of the following:

a. The patient has a diagnosis of severe eosinophilic asthma and ALL of the following:

i. The patient is within the FDA labeled age for the requested agent:

1. Cinqair: 18 years of age or over
2. Fasenra: 12 years of age or over
3. Nucala: 12 years of age or over

**AND**

ii. The patient's diagnosis has been confirmed by ONE of the following eosinophilic counts for the requested agent:

1. If the requested agent is Cinqair, the patient has a blood eosinophilic count greater than or equal to 400 cells/MicroLiter within the previous 12 months

**OR**

2. If the requested agent is Fasenra, the patient has a blood eosinophilic count greater than or equal to 150 cells/microLiter

**OR**

3. If the requested agent is Nucala, the patient has ONE of the following:

a. Blood eosinophilic count greater than or equal to 150 cells/microLiter prior to initiation (within the previous 6 weeks) of therapy with the requested agent **OR**

b. Blood eosinophilic count greater than or equal to 300 cells/microLiter within the previous 12 months **OR**

c. Sputum eosinophilic count greater than 3%

**AND**

iii. ONE of the following:

1. If the requested agent is Fasenra AND the patient is aged 12 years to 17 years, the patient has a baseline Forced Expiratory Volume (FEV<sub>1</sub>) that is less than 90% of predicted

**OR**

2. The patient has a baseline FEV<sub>1</sub> that is less than 80% of predicted

**AND**

iv. The patient has ONE of the following:

1. Frequent severe asthma exacerbations requiring two or more courses of systemic corticosteroids (steroid burst) within the past 12 months **OR**

2. Serious asthma exacerbations requiring hospitalization, mechanical ventilation, or visit to the emergency room or urgent care within the past 12 months **OR**

3. Controlled asthma that worsens when the doses of inhaled or systemic corticosteroids are tapered
- v. ONE of the following:
  1. The patient is currently treated with a maximally tolerated inhaled corticosteroid within the past 90 days **OR**
  2. The patient has a documented intolerance, FDA labeled contraindication, or hypersensitivity to inhaled corticosteroids

**AND**

- vi. ONE of the following:
  1. The patient is currently treated with ONE of the following within the past 90 days:
    - a. A long-acting beta-2 agonist (LABA) **OR**
    - b. A leukotriene receptor antagonist (LRTA) **OR**
    - c. Long-acting muscarinic antagonist (LAMA) **OR**
    - d. Theophylline
  - OR**
  2. The patient has a documented intolerance, FDA labeled contraindication, or hypersensitivity to a long-acting beta-2 agonist (LABA), leukotriene receptor antagonist (LRTA), long-acting muscarinic antagonist (LAMA), AND theophylline

**OR**

- b. The patient has a diagnosis of eosinophilic granulomatosis with polyangiitis (EGPA) and ALL of the following:
  - i. The requested agent is Nucala
  - AND**
  - ii. The patient is 18 years of age or over
  - AND**
  - iii. The patient has a history of EGPA for at least 6 months with a history of relapsing or refractory disease
  - AND**
  - iv. The patient's diagnosis of EGPA was confirmed by ONE of the following:
    1. The patient meets 4 of the following:
      - a. History of asthma (wheezing or the finding of diffuse high pitched wheezes in expiration)
      - b. Greater than 10% eosinophils on differential leukocyte count
      - c. Mononeuropathy (including multiplex) or polyneuropathy
      - d. Migratory or transient pulmonary opacities detected radiographically
      - e. Paranasal sinus abnormality
      - f. Biopsy containing blood vessel showing the accumulation of eosinophils in extravascular areas
    - OR**
    2. The patient meets ALL of the following:
      - a. Medical history of asthma **AND**
      - b. Peak peripheral blood eosinophilia > 1500 cells/microL **AND**
      - c. Systemic vasculitis involving two or more extra-pulmonary organs
  - AND**
  - v. ONE of the following:
    1. The patient is currently on maximally tolerated oral corticosteroid therapy within the past 90 days **OR**
    2. The patient has a documented intolerance, FDA labeled contraindication, or hypersensitivity to oral corticosteroid therapy

**AND**

vi. ONE of the following:

1. The patient has tried and failed an oral immunosuppressant (i.e., azathioprine, methotrexate) in the past 90 days **OR**
2. The patient has a documented intolerance, FDA labeled contraindication, or hypersensitivity to immunosuppressants

**OR**

c. Another FDA approved indication

**AND**

2. The patient will NOT receive the requested agent in combination with Xolair or with another interleukin 5 (IL-5) inhibitor (e.g. Cinqair, Fasenra, Nucala) indicated for the requested indication

**AND**

3. The patient does NOT have any FDA labeled contraindications to the requested agent

**AND**

4. The requested dose is within the FDA labeled dose for the requested indication

**Length of Approval:** 6 months for severe eosinophilic asthma, 12 months for EGPA and all other FDA approved indications

The requested agent will also be approved when the following are met:

1. The patient does not have any FDA labeled contraindications to the requested agent

**AND**

2. The patient will not receive the requested agent in combination with Xolair or with another interleukin 5 (IL-5) inhibitor indicated for asthma (e.g. Cinqair, Fasenra, Nucala)

**AND**

3. The use of the target agent is for an indication that is supported by compendia. (NCCN Compendium™ [level of evidence 1, 2A], AHFS, DrugDex [FDA approved Class I or Class IIa]), or the prescriber has submitted additional documentation (the use is supported by clinical research in 2 or more peer reviewed medical journals) supporting the requested therapeutic use (approval by the Clinical Review Pharmacist required).

**AND**

4. The requested dose is within FDA labeling or dose is supported by compendia. (NCCN Compendium™ [level of evidence 1, 2A], AHFS, DrugDex [FDA approved Class I or Class IIa]), or the prescriber has submitted additional documentation (the dose is supported by clinical research in 2 or more peer reviewed medical journals) supporting the requested therapeutic dose (approval by the Clinical Review Pharmacist required)

**Length of Approval:** Up to 12 months

**Renewal Evaluation**

**Cinqair** (reslizumab), **Fasenra** (benralizumab), and **Nucala** (mepolizumab) will be approved when ALL of the following are met:

1. The patient has been previously approved for the requested agent through the Prime Therapeutics or BCBSRI PA or Medical Review process

**AND**

2. ONE of the following:

a. The patient has a diagnosis of severe eosinophilic asthma AND BOTH of the following:

i. The patient has had clinical response or disease stabilization as defined by ONE of the following:

1. Increase in percent predicted Forced Expiratory Volume (FEV<sub>1</sub>) from baseline **OR**

2. Decrease in the dose of inhaled corticosteroids required to control the patient's asthma **OR**
3. Decrease in need for treatment with systemic corticosteroids due to exacerbations of asthma **OR**
4. Decrease in number of hospitalizations, need for mechanical ventilation, or visits to urgent care or emergency room due to exacerbations of asthma

**AND**

- ii. ONE of the following:
  1. The patient is currently treated and is compliant with standard therapy (e.g. inhaled corticosteroids, long-acting beta-2 agonist (LABA), leukotriene receptor antagonist (LRTA), long-acting muscarinic antagonist (LAMA), theophylline) within the past 90 days **OR**
  2. The patient has a documented intolerance, FDA labeled contraindication, or hypersensitivity to ALL standard therapies

**OR**

- b. The patient has a diagnosis of eosinophilic granulomatosis with polyangiitis (EGPA) AND ALL of the following:
    - i. The requested agent is Nucala
- AND**
- ii. The patient has had clinical response or disease stabilization as defined by ONE of the following:
    1. Remission achieved with the requested agent **OR**
    2. Decrease in corticosteroid maintenance dose required for control of symptoms related to EGPA **OR**
    3. Decrease in hospitalization due to symptoms of EGPA **OR**
    4. Dose of maintenance corticosteroid therapy and/or immunosuppressant therapy was not increased

**AND**

- iii. ONE of the following:
  1. The patient is currently treated and is compliant with maintenance therapy with oral corticosteroids within the past 90 days **OR**
  2. The patient has a documented intolerance, FDA labeled contraindication, or hypersensitivity to oral corticosteroids

**OR**

- c. The patient has another FDA approved indication

**AND**

3. The patient will NOT receive the requested agent in combination with Xolair or with another interleukin 5 (IL-5) inhibitor (e.g. Cinqair, Fasenna, Nucala) indicated for the requested indication
- AND**
4. The patient does NOT have any FDA labeled contraindications to the requested agent
- AND**
5. The requested dose is within the FDA labeled dose for the requested indication

**Length of approval:** 12 months

The requested agent will also be approved when the following are met:

1. The patient has been previously approved for the requested agent through the Prime Therapeutics or BCBSRI PA or Medical Review process
- AND**
2. The patient does not have any FDA labeled contraindications to the requested agent
- AND**
3. The patient will not receive the requested agent in combination with Xolair or with another interleukin 5 (IL-5) inhibitor indicated for asthma (e.g. Cinqair, Fasenna, Nucala)

**AND**

4. The use of the target agent is for an indication that is supported by compendia. (NCCN Compendium™ [level of evidence 1, 2A], AHFS, DrugDex [FDA approved Class I or Class IIa]), or the prescriber has submitted additional documentation (the use is supported by clinical research in 2 or more peer reviewed medical journals) supporting the requested therapeutic use (approval by the Clinical Review Pharmacist required).

**AND**

5. The requested dose is within FDA labeling or dose is supported by compendia. (NCCN Compendium™ [level of evidence 1, 2A], AHFS, DrugDex [FDA approved Class I or Class IIa]), or the prescriber has submitted additional documentation (the dose is supported by clinical research in 2 or more peer reviewed medical journals) supporting the requested therapeutic dose (approval by the Clinical Review Pharmacist required)

**PRIOR AUTHORIZATION**

**BlueCHiP for Medicare**

Prior authorization is required for BlueCHiP for Medicare.

**POLICY STATEMENT**

Injectable agents for asthma and chronic idiopathic urticaria, Xolair, Cinqair, Fasentra and Nucala are medically necessary for BlueCHiP for Medicare when all of the above medical criteria are met.

**COVERAGE**

Benefits may vary between groups and contracts. Please refer to the appropriate Benefit Booklet, Evidence of Coverage or Subscriber agreement for applicable physician administered infused drug benefits/coverage.

**BACKGROUND**

**Xolair® (omalizumab)**

**Moderate to Severe Allergic (IgE-mediated) Asthma:**

Omalizumab is indicated for moderate to severe allergic asthma. Allergic asthma is triggered by inhalation of allergens. IgE is the antibody responsible for activation of allergic reactions and is important to the pathogenesis of allergic asthma and the development and persistence of inflammation. The Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) guidelines define moderate asthma as that which is well controlled with low dose inhaled corticosteroids (ICS) in combination with a long acting beta agonist (LABA). Severe asthma is defined as "asthma that requires treatment with high dose ICS plus a second controller and/or systemic corticosteroids to prevent it from becoming 'uncontrolled' or which remains 'uncontrolled' despite this therapy." Both GINA and the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program (NAEPP) recommend use of omalizumab as add on therapy for patients who have failed to respond to standard therapy and have IgE-mediated allergic asthma.

**Chronic Idiopathic Urticaria (CIU)**

Chronic urticaria is a cutaneous mast cell degranulation lasting more than 6 weeks characterized by hives or wheals. The wheals usually last less than 24 hours with itching being the most common symptom. Diagnosis involves evaluation of labs including a complete blood count with differential, stool samples (assessing for parasitic activity), erythrocyte sedimentation rate, antinuclear antibody, hepatitis B and C titers, serum cryoglobulin and complement assays, thyroid function testing, and Chronic Urticaria index.

The standard of care is non-sedating antihistamines. Additional agents may be added on and/or substituted including leukotriene antagonists, systemic corticosteroids, immunomodulators, anti-inflammatory agents, and thyroid medications for patients who failed to respond to antihistamines.

**Cinqair® (reslizumab)**

**Fasenra™** (benralizumab)  
**Nucala®** (mepolizumab)

### **Severe Asthma Phenotype and Eosinophilic Asthma Subphenotype**

Severe asthma is defined as “asthma that requires treatment with high dose inhaled corticosteroids (ICS) plus a second controller and/or systemic corticosteroids to prevent it from becoming ‘uncontrolled’ or which remains ‘uncontrolled’ despite this therapy.” Despite the availability of multiple asthma treatments, a substantial proportion of patients with severe asthma continue to have uncontrolled disease. Thirty to forty percent of severe asthma patients still need regular bursts of systemic steroids to control their asthma. Severe asthma has a considerable amount of variability in its pattern of inflammation, and this variability causes multiple phenotypical differences that influence treatment response.

Eosinophilic asthma is a subphenotype of severe asthma characterized by elevated sputum and blood eosinophil levels as well as increased asthma severity, atopy, late-onset disease, and steroid refractoriness. Several biomarkers including blood eosinophilic counts and sputum eosinophilic counts are used in diagnosing severe asthma with an eosinophilic phenotype. As with other severe forms of asthma, the Gold Standard/International Guidelines treatment for severe asthma, including eosinophilic asthma, is high dose ICS plus a long acting beta-2 agonist (LABA), leukotriene modifier or theophylline and/or continuous systemic corticosteroids as background therapy. Newer therapies that specifically target formation of eosinophils may also be utilized. Cinqair (reslizumab), Fasenra (benralizumab), and Nucala (mepolizumab) are examples of such agents FDA indicated for severe eosinophilic asthma.

### **CODING**

#### **BlueCHiP for Medicare**

The following HCPCS codes for biological supply are medically necessary the when medical criteria are met:

- J0517** Injection, benralizumab, 1 mg
- J2182** Injection, mepolizumab, 1 mg
- J2357** Injection, omalizumab, 5 mg
- J2786** Injection, reslizumab, 1 mg

### **RELATED POLICIES**

Prior Authorization of Drugs

### **PUBLISHED**

Provider Update, August 2019  
Provider Update, June 2018  
Provider Update, May 2018  
Provider Update, January 2018  
Provider Update, November 2016

### **REFERENCES**

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