Medical Coverage Policy | Amniotic Membrane and Amniotic Fluid

EFFECTIVE DATE: 07|01|2023
POLICY LAST REVIEWED: 06|03|2026

OVERVIEW

Several commercially available forms of human amniotic membrane (HAM) and amniotic fluid can be administered by patches, topical application, or injection. Amniotic membrane and amniotic fluid are being evaluated for the treatment of a variety of conditions, including chronic full-thickness diabetic lower extremity ulcers, venous ulcers, knee osteoarthritis, plantar fasciitis, and ophthalmic conditions.

MEDICAL CRITERIA

Not applicable

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION

Not applicable

POLICY STATEMENT

Medicare Advantage Plans and Commercial Products

Treatment of nonhealing diabetic lower-extremity ulcers using the following human amniotic membrane products (ie, Affinity®, AmnioBand® Membrane, Biovance®, EpiCord®, EpiFix®, Grafix™, NuShield®) may be considered medically necessary when filed with a covered diagnosis identified below.

Human amniotic membrane grafts (i.e., a human amniotic product commercially available specifically for ophthalmic use) with or without suture may be considered medically necessary for the treatment of any the following ophthalmic indications when filed with a covered diagnosis identified below:

- Neurotrophic keratitis;
- Corneal ulcers and melts;
- Corneal perforation;
- Bullous keratopathy;
- Partial limbal stem cell deficiency with extensive diseased tissue;
- Moderate or severe Stevens-Johnson syndrome;
- Persistent epithelial defects;
- Severe dry eye; or
- Moderate or severe acute ocular chemical burn

Human amniotic membrane grafts (i.e., a human amniotic product commercially available specifically for ophthalmic use) with suture or glue may be considered medically necessary for the treatment of any the following ophthalmic indications when filed with a covered diagnosis identified below:

- Corneal perforation; or
- Pterygium repair

Medicare Advantage Plans

Injection of human amniotic fluid is considered not covered as the evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Injection of micronized or particulated human amniotic membrane and injection of human amniotic fluid is not covered for all indications, including but not limited to osteoarthritis and plantar fasciitis, as the evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

The use of any human amniotic product (e.g., derived from amnion, chorion, amniotic fluid, umbilical cord, or Wharton's jelly) is considered not covered for all other indications, including but not limited to treatment of lower-extremity ulcers due to venous insufficiency and repair following Mohs micrographic surgery.

Commercial Products
Injection of human amniotic fluid is considered not medically necessary as the evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Injection of micronized or particulated human amniotic membrane and injection of human amniotic fluid is considered not medically necessary for all indications, including but not limited to osteoarthritis and plantar fasciitis, as the evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

The use of any human amniotic product (e.g., derived from amnion, chorion, amniotic fluid, umbilical cord, or Wharton's jelly) is considered not medically necessary for all other indications, including but not limited to treatment of lower-extremity ulcers due to venous insufficiency and repair following Mohs micrographic surgery.

COVERAGE
Benefits may vary between groups and contracts. Please refer to the appropriate section of the Benefit Booklet, Evidence of Coverage or Subscriber Agreement for applicable surgery and not medically necessary/not covered benefits/coverage.

BACKGROUND
Human amniotic membrane
Human amniotic membrane (HAM) consists of 2 conjoined layers, the amnion, and chorion, and forms the innermost lining of the amniotic sac or placenta. When prepared for use as an allograft, the membrane is harvested immediately after birth, cleaned, sterilized, and either cryopreserved or dehydrated. Many products available using amnion, chorion, amniotic fluid, and umbilical cord are being studied for the treatment of a variety of conditions, including chronic full-thickness diabetic lower-extremity ulcers, venous ulcers, knee osteoarthritis, plantar fasciitis, and ophthalmic conditions. The products are formulated either as patches, which can be applied as wound covers, or as suspensions or particulates, or connective tissue extractions, which can be injected or applied topically.

Fresh amniotic membrane contains collagen, fibronectin, and hyaluronic acis, along with a combination of growth factors, cytokines, and anti-inflammatory proteins such as interleukin-1 receptor antagonist. There is evidence that the tissue has anti-flammatory, antifibroblastic, and antimicrobial properties. HAM is considered nonimmunogenic and has not been observed to cause a substantial immune response. It is believed that these properties are retained in cryopreserved HAM and HAM products, resulting in a readily available tissue with regenerative potential. In support, 1 HAM product has been shown to elute growth factors into saline and stimulate the migration of mesenchymal stem cells, both in vitro and in vivo.

Use of a HAM graft, which is fixated by sutures, is an established treatment for disorders of the corneal surface, including neurotrophic keratitis, corneal ulcers and melts, following pterygium repair, Stevens-Johnson syndrome, and persistent epithelial defects. Amniotic membrane products that are inserted like a contact lens have more recently been investigated for the treatment of corneal and ocular surface disorders. Amniotic membrane patches are also being evaluated for the treatment of various other conditions, including skin wounds, burns, leg ulcers, and prevention of tissue adhesion in surgical procedures. Additional indications studied in preclinical models include tendonitis, tendon repair, and nerve repair. The availability of HAM opens the possibility of regenerative medicine for an array of conditions.

Amniotic fluid
Amniotic fluid surrounds the fetus during pregnancy and provides protection and nourishment. In the second half of gestation, most of the fluid is a result of micturition and secretion from the respiratory tract and

gastrointestinal tract of the fetus, along with urea. The fluid contains proteins, carbohydrates, peptides, fats, amino acids, enzymes, hormones, pigments, and fetal cells. Use of human and bovine amniotic fluid for orthopedic conditions was first reported in 1927. Amniotic fluid has been compared with synovial fluid, containing hyaluronan, lubricant, cholesterol, and cytokines. Injection of amniotic fluid or amniotic fluid–derived cells is currently being evaluated for the treatment of osteoarthritis and plantar fasciitis.

Diabetic Lower-Extremity Ulcers

For individuals who have non-healing diabetic lower-extremity ulcers who receive a patch or flowable formulation of HAM or placental membrane (ie, Affinity, AmnioBand Membrane, AmnioExcel, Biovance, EpiCord, EpiFix, Grafix), the evidence includes randomized controlled trials (RCTs). Relevant outcomes are symptoms, morbid events, functional outcomes, and quality of life. The RCTs evaluating amniotic and placental membrane products for the treatment of non-healing (<20% healing with ≥2 weeks of standard care) diabetic lower-extremity ulcers have compared HAM with standard care or with an established advanced wound care product. These trials used wound closure as the primary outcome measure, and some used power analysis, blinded assessment of wound healing, and intention-to-treat analysis. For the HAM products that have been sufficiently evaluated (ie, Affinity, AmnioBand Membrane, Biovance, EpiCord, EpiFix, Grafix), results have shown improved outcomes compared with standard care, and outcomes that are at least as good as an established advanced wound care product. Improved health outcomes in the RCTs are supported by multicenter registries. The evidence is sufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Lower-Extremity Ulcers due to Venous Insufficiency

For individuals who have lower-extremity ulcers due to venous insufficiency who receive a formulation of HAM, the evidence includes 34 RCTs. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, morbid events, functional outcomes, and quality of life. The published evidence on HAM for the treatment of venous leg ulcers includes 2 multicenter RCTs with EpiFix and 1 multicenter RCT with Amnioband. One RCT reported a larger percent wound closure at 4 weeks, but the percentage of patients with complete wound closure at 4 weeks did not differ between EpiFix and the standard of care. A second RCT evaluated complete wound closure at 12 weeks after weekly application of EpiFix or standard dressings with compression, but interpretation is limited by methodologic concerns. The third RCT demonstrated significantly greater blinded assessor-confirmed rates of complete wound closure at 12 weeks after weekly or twice-weekly application of AmnioBand Membrane with compression bandaging compared with compression bandaging alone. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Osteoarthritis

For individuals who have knee osteoarthritis who receive an injection of suspension or particulate formulation of HAM or amniotic fluid, the evidence includes a feasibility study. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, functional outcomes, quality of life, and treatment-related morbidity. The pilot study assessed the feasibility of a larger RCT evaluating HAM injection. Additional trials, which will have a larger sample size and longer follow-up, are needed to permit conclusions on the effect of this treatment. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Plantar Fasciitis

The evidence on injection of amniotic membrane for the treatment of plantar fasciitis includes preliminary studies and a larger (N =145) patient-blinded comparison of micronized injectable-HAM and placebo control. Injection of micronized amniotic membrane resulted in greater improvements in the visual analog score for pain and the Foot Functional Index compared to placebo controls. The primary limitation of the study is that this is an interim report with 12-month results pending. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Ophthalmic Conditions

Sutured HAM transplant has been used for many years for the treatment of ophthalmic conditions. Many of these conditions are rare, leading to difficulty in conducting RCTs. The rarity, severity, and variability of the ophthalmic condition was taken into consideration in evaluating the evidence.

Neurotrophic Keratitis with Ocular Surface Damage and Inflammation That Does Not Respond to Conservative Therapy

For individuals who have neurotrophic keratitis with ocular surface damage and inflammation that does not respond to conservative therapy who receive HAM, the evidence includes RCT. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, morbid events, functional outcomes, and quality of life. An RCT of 30 patients showed no benefit of sutured HAM graft compared to tarsorrhaphy or bandage contact lens. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Corneal Ulcers and Melts That Do Not Respond to Initial Medical Therapy

For individuals who have corneal ulcers and melts, that do not respond to initial medical therapy who receive HAM, the evidence includes a systematic review of primarily case series and a non-randomized comparative study. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, morbid events, functional outcomes, and quality of life. Corneal ulcers and melts are uncommon and variable and additional RCTs are not expected. The systematic review showed healing in 97% of patients with an improvement of vision in 53% of eyes. One retrospective comparative study with 22 patients found more rapid and complete epithelialization and more patients with a clinically significant improvement in visual acuity following early treatment with self-retained amniotic membrane when compared to historical controls. Corneal ulcers and melts are uncommon and variable and RCTs are not expected. The evidence is sufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Corneal Perforation When There is Active Inflammation After Corneal Transplant Requiring Adjunctive Treatment

For individuals who have corneal perforation when there is active inflammation after corneal transplant requiring adjunctive treatment who receive HAM, the evidence is limited. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, morbid events, functional outcomes, and quality of life. No comparative evidence was identified for this indication. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Bullous Keratopathy as a Palliative Measure in Patients Who are Not Candidates for a Curative Treatment (eg, Endothelial or Penetrating Keratoplasty)

For individuals who have bullous keratopathy and who are not candidates for curative treatment (eg, endothelial or penetrating keratoplasty) who receive HAM, the evidence includes an RCT. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, morbid events, functional outcomes, and quality of life. An RCT found no advantage of sutured HAM over the simpler stromal puncture procedure for the treatment of pain from bullous keratopathy. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Partial Limbal Stem Cell Deficiency with Extensive Diseased Tissue Where Selective Removal Alone is Not Sufficient

For individuals who have partial limbal stem cell deficiency with extensive diseased tissue where selective removal alone is not sufficient who receive HAM, the evidence is limited. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, morbid events, functional outcomes, and quality of life. No comparative trials were identified on HAM for limbal stem cell deficiency. Improvement in visual acuity has been reported for some patients who have received HAM in conjunction with removal of the diseased limbus. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Moderate or Severe Stevens-Johnson Syndrome

For individuals who have moderate or severe Stevens-Johnson syndrome who receive HAM, the evidence includes an RCT. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, morbid events, functional outcomes, and quality of life. The evidence on HAM for the treatment of Stevens-Johnson syndrome (includes 1 RCT with 25 patients [50 eyes]) found improved symptoms and function with HAM compared to medical therapy alone. Large RCTs are unlikely due to the severity and rarity of the disease. The evidence is sufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Persistent Epithelial Defects and Ulceration That Do Not Respond to Conservative Therapy
For individuals who have persistent epithelial defects that do not respond to conservative therapy who receive HAM, the evidence is limited. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, morbid events, functional outcomes, and quality of life. No comparative trials were identified on persistent epithelial defects and ulceration. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Severe Dry Eye with Ocular Surface Damage and Inflammation That Does Not Respond to Conservative Therapy
For individuals who have severe dry eye with ocular surface damage and inflammation that does not respond to conservative therapy, who receive HAM, the evidence includes an RCT and a large case series. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, morbid events, functional outcomes, and quality of life. The evidence on HAM for severe dry eye with ocular surface damage and inflammation includes an RCT with 20 patients and a retrospective series of 84 patients (97 eyes). Placement of self-retained HAM for 2 to 11 days reduced symptoms and restored a smooth corneal surface and corneal nerve density for as long as 3 months. The evidence is sufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Moderate or Severe Acute Ocular Chemical Burns
For individuals who have moderate or severe acute ocular chemical burn who receive HAM, the evidence includes 3 RCTs. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, morbid events, functional outcomes, and quality of life. Evidence includes a total of 197 patients with acute ocular chemical burns who were treated with HAM transplantation plus medical therapy or medical therapy alone. Two of the 3 RCTs did not show a faster rate of epithelial healing, and there was no significant benefit for other outcomes. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Corneal Perforation When Corneal Tissue is Not Immediately Available
For individuals who have corneal perforation when corneal tissue is not immediately available who receive sutured HAM, the evidence is limited. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, morbid events, functional outcomes, and quality of life. The standard treatment for corneal perforation is corneal transplantation, however, HAM may provide temporary coverage of the severe defect when corneal tissue is not immediately available. The evidence is sufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Pterygium Repair When There is Insufficient Healthy Tissue to Create a Conjunctival Autograft
For individuals who have pterygium repair when there is insufficient healthy tissue to create a conjunctival autograft who receive HAM, the evidence includes RCTs and systematic reviews of RCTs. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, morbid events, functional outcomes, and quality of life. Systematic reviews of RCTs have been published that found that conjunctival or limbal autograft is more effective than HAM graft in reducing the rate of pterygium recurrence. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Repair Following Mohs Micrographic Surgery
For individuals who have undergone Mohs micrographic surgery for skin cancer on the face, head, neck, or dorsal hand who receive human amniotic/chorionic membrane, the evidence includes a nonrandomized, comparative study and no RCTs. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, morbid events, functional outcomes, and quality of life. A retrospective analysis using data from medical records compared a dehydrated human amniotic/chorionic membrane product (dHACM, Epifix) to repair using autologous surgery in 143 propensity-score matched pairs of patients requiring same-day reconstruction after Mohs microsurgery for skin cancer on the head, face, or neck. A greater proportion of patients who received dHACM repair experienced zero complications (97.9% vs. 71.3%; $p<.0001$; relative risk 13.97; 95% CI, 4.33 to 43.12). Placental allograft reconstructions developed less infection ($p=.004$) and were less likely to experience poor scar cosmesis ($p<.0001$). This study is limited by its retrospective observational design. Well-designed and conducted prospective studies are lacking. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

CODING

Medicare Advantage Plans and Commercial Products

The HCPCS codes identified in the attached list are considered medically necessary when filed with the ICD-10 Diagnosis Codes also included in the attached list.

Amniotic Membrane and Amniotic Fluid HCPCS and ICD-10 Codes

RELATED POLICIES

Not applicable

PUBLISHED

Provider Update, August 2026
Provider Update, November 2025
Provider Update, August 2024
Provider Update, May 2023
Provider Update, June 2022, December 2022

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