



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

PHARMACY COVERAGE GUIDELINES
SECTION: DRUGS

ORIGINAL EFFECTIVE DATE: 4/01/2019
LAST REVIEW DATE: 2/18/2021
LAST CRITERIA REVISION DATE: 2/13/2020
ARCHIVE DATE:

ACTHAR® GEL (repository corticotropin) injection

Coverage for services, procedures, medical devices and drugs are dependent upon benefit eligibility as outlined in the member's specific benefit plan. This Pharmacy Coverage Guideline must be read in its entirety to determine coverage eligibility, if any.

This Pharmacy Coverage Guideline provides information related to coverage determinations only and does not imply that a service or treatment is clinically appropriate or inappropriate. The provider and the member are responsible for all decisions regarding the appropriateness of care. Providers should provide BCBSAZ complete medical rationale when requesting any exceptions to these guidelines.

The section identified as "Description" defines or describes a service, procedure, medical device or drug and is in no way intended as a statement of medical necessity and/or coverage.

The section identified as "Criteria" defines criteria to determine whether a service, procedure, medical device or drug is considered medically necessary or experimental or investigational.

State or federal mandates, e.g., FEP program, may dictate that any drug, device or biological product approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) may not be considered experimental or investigational and thus the drug, device or biological product may be assessed only on the basis of medical necessity.

Pharmacy Coverage Guidelines are subject to change as new information becomes available.

For purposes of this Pharmacy Coverage Guideline, the terms "experimental" and "investigational" are considered to be interchangeable.

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This Pharmacy Coverage Guideline does not apply to FEP or other states' Blues Plans.

Information about medications that require precertification is available at www.azblue.com/pharmacy.

Some large (100+) benefit plan groups may customize certain benefits, including adding or deleting precertification requirements.

All applicable benefit plan provisions apply, e.g., waiting periods, limitations, exclusions, waivers and benefit maximums.

Precertification for medication(s) or product(s) indicated in this guideline requires completion of the [request form](#) in its entirety with the chart notes as documentation. **All requested data must be provided.** Once completed the form must be signed by the prescribing provider and faxed back to BCBSAZ Pharmacy Management at (602) 864-3126 or emailed to Pharmacyprecert@azblue.com. **Incomplete forms or forms without the chart notes will be returned.**



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Criteria:

- **Criteria for initial therapy:** Acthar Gel (repository corticotropin) is considered *medically necessary* and will be approved when **ALL** of the following criteria are met:
1. Prescriber is a physician specializing in the patient's diagnosis or is in consultation with a Neurologist
 2. A confirmed diagnosis of **ONE** of the following:
 - a. Individual under 2 years of age with infantile spasms (West Syndrome)
 - b. Individual 18 years of age or older with acute exacerbation of multiple sclerosis who is adherent with immune suppressing maintenance agent for multiple sclerosis **AND** has a contraindication to or is intolerant to corticosteroids that are not also expected to occur with use of Acthar Gel **AND** will not be using Acthar Gel on a monthly basis for prophylaxis of acute exacerbations of multiple sclerosis
 - c. Individual 18 years of age or older with a corticosteroid responsive condition who has a contraindication to or is intolerant to corticosteroids that are not also expected to occur with use of Acthar Gel
 3. There are **NO** contraindications
 - a. Contraindications include:
 - i. Intravenous administration
 - ii. Congenital infection suspected in an infant
 - iii. Administration of live or attenuated vaccines in an individual on immunosuppressive doses of Acthar gel
 - iv. Scleroderma, osteoporosis, systemic fungal infections, ocular herpes simplex, recent surgery, history of or the presence of a peptic ulcer, congestive heart failure, uncontrolled hypertension, primary adrenocortical insufficiency, adrenocortical hyperfunction, or sensitivity to proteins of porcine origin

Initial approval duration: 4 weeks

Requests beyond 4 weeks requires a Medical Director review

Maximum of 35 mL (7 vials) will be authorized, requests for more vials requires a Medical Director review

- **Criteria for continuation of coverage (renewal request):** Acthar Gel (repository corticotropin) is considered *medically necessary* and will be approved when **ALL** of the following criteria are met:
1. Individual continues to be seen by a physician specializing in the patient's diagnosis or is in consultation with a Neurologist
 2. All requests for renewal or continuation will be reviewed using initial criteria and if approved the same duration will apply
 3. Individual has been adherent with the medication

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4. Individual has not developed any contraindications or other significant level 4 adverse drug effects that may exclude continued use
 - a. Contraindications as listed in the criteria for initial therapy section
 - b. Significant adverse effect such as:
 - i. Infection
 - ii. Adrenal insufficiency
 - iii. Cushing's syndrome
 - iv. Gastrointestinal perforation and bleeding

Renewal duration: 4 weeks

- Acthar Gel (repository corticotropin) for all other indications not previously listed is considered ***experimental or investigational*** and will not be covered when any one or more of the following criteria are met:
1. Lack of final approval from the Food and Drug Administration;
 2. Insufficient scientific evidence to permit conclusions concerning the effect on health outcomes;
 3. Insufficient evidence to support improvement of the net health outcome;
 4. Insufficient evidence to support improvement of the net health outcome as much as, or more than, established alternatives; **or**
 5. Insufficient evidence to support improvement outside the investigational setting.

These indications include, but are not limited to:

- Treatment with dosing, frequency, or duration outside the FDA-approved dosing, frequency, and duration.

Description:

Acthar Gel (repository corticotropin) injection is a preparation of the natural form of adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) in gelatin to provide a prolonged release after intramuscular or subcutaneous injection. ACTH works by stimulating the adrenal cortex to produce cortisol, corticosterone and a number of other hormones. Acthar Gel is primarily used for treating infantile spasms (West syndrome), it has been investigated for diagnostic testing of adrenocortical function, and it has been used in the treatment of a variety of other conditions.

Acthar Gel was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 1952, before there was a requirement that innovator companies provide clinical evidence of efficacy of their product. Acthar Gel Product label says that it is **indicated** for infantile spasms and **indicated** for the treatment of acute exacerbations of multiple sclerosis. The product label includes a number of conditions where it says Acthar Gel **may be used**. However, there is a lack of sufficient published evidence to establish efficacy. The clinical studies section of the product labeling of Acthar Gel describes efficacy data **only for** infantile spasms.

Clinical efficacy and safety data for the majority of these uses is lacking. There is little data is available for the general uses for rheumatic, collagen, dermatologic, allergic states, ophthalmic, respiratory, and edematous disorders/diseases and these uses were grandfathered in by the FDA. Based on the lack of both efficacy and safety data for the above referenced grandfathered uses, these additional disorders will be considered unsupported.



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Although Acthar Gel can be used to treat various other medical conditions responsive to corticosteroid therapy, it has not been proven to be superior to corticosteroids for any of these uses. Corticosteroid therapy is generally considered the treatment of choice. Acthar Gel has limited therapeutic value since it cannot be administered orally and its effectiveness is dependent on adrenocortical responsiveness.

There is a lack of controlled studies on ACTH for treatment of non-corticosteroid-responsive conditions who have received repository corticotropin.

Some controlled clinical trials have shown Acthar Gel to be effective in speeding the resolution of acute exacerbations of multiple sclerosis. Other clinical trials comparing ACTH and methylprednisolone (MP) in treatment of acute exacerbation in multiple sclerosis have either shown no difference between treatments or have shown that the MP cohort had a more rapid or greater improvement in treatment of the acute exacerbation as measure by the Kurtzke Disability Status Scale (DSS). Multiple sclerosis treatment guidelines recommend the use of high dose IV or oral methylprednisolone for acute exacerbations of multiple sclerosis rather than use of Acthar Gel.

Infantile spasms is a rare epileptic disorder of infancy (90% of cases are diagnosed in the first year of life). When infantile spasms are accompanied by neurodevelopmental regression and electroencephalogram (EEG) findings of hypsarrhythmia, the condition is known as West Syndrome. Characteristics of infantile spasms include mental retardation and hypsarrhythmia, a specific abnormal pattern detected by an EEG that is described as slow waves of high voltage and random pattern of spikes that vary in duration and location. Infantile spasms are characterized by sudden jerking and bending forward of the body, followed by stiffening of the body. Spasms usually last around 1-5 seconds, but can range from 2-500 spasms at any given time. Vigabatrin oral solution is another treatment available for infantile spasms. Studies suggest that hormonal treatment (prednisolone, ACTH) resolve infantile spasms faster than vigabatrin and resolve the condition in more children, but long-term developmental and epilepsy outcomes are unknown.

Acthar Gel is available as a 5 mL vial (80 units/mL, total of 400 units). The adverse effects of Acthar Gel are related primarily to its steroid-like effects.

Acthar Gel is a naturally sourced complex mixture of adrenocorticotrophic hormone analogs and other pituitary peptides. The manufacturing process converts the initial porcine pituitary extract with low ACTH content into a mixture having modified porcine ACTH and other related peptide analogs solubilized in gelatin. A major component in the formulated complex mixture is N-25 deamidated porcine ACTH (1-39).

Definitions:

Infantile spasms:

Evidence of specific abnormal pattern detected by a video EEG with hypsarrhythmia

Response is defined as achieved and maintains complete cessation of spasms and elimination of hypsarrhythmia on a full sleep video EEG



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MS exacerbation:

Evidence of an attack with neurologic disturbances consistent with MS that have lasted for at least 24 hours and is separated from the previous attack by at least 30 days

Response is defined as **THREE** of the following:

- Mild/minimal to no functional neurologic (pyramidal, cerebellar, brainstem, sensory) disabilities
- Ambulatory without need for assistance
- Reduction in number of exacerbations or relapses of MS
- Prolonged time to exacerbation or relapses of MS
- Reduction in hospitalizations for MS

Resources:

Acthar Gel (repository corticotropin) product information, revised by Mallinckrodt ARD, LLC. 03-2019, at DailyMed <http://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov>. Accessed February 02, 2021.

5.01.17 Blue Cross Blue Shield Association Medical: Repository Corticotropin Injection. Review date November 2020. Accessed on February 02, 2021.

Glaze DG. Management and prognosis of infantile spasms. In: UpToDate, Norfli DR, Dashe JF (Eds), UpToDate, Waltham MA.: UpToDate Inc. <http://uptodate.com>. Accessed on February 02, 2021.

Olek MJ, Howard J. Treatment of acute exacerbations of multiple sclerosis in adults. In: UpToDate, Gonzalez-Scarano F, Dashe JF (Eds), UpToDate, Waltham MA.: UpToDate Inc. <http://uptodate.com>. Accessed on February 02, 2021.
