



Drug Coverage Policy

Effective Date.....2/1/2026

Coverage Policy Number.....IP0311

Policy Title..... Pirfenidone

Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis and Related Lung Disease – Pirfenidone

- Esbriet® (pirfenidone capsules and film-coated tablets - Genentech, generic)

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 where appropriate and have discretion in making individual coverage determinations. Where coverage for care or services does not depend on specific circumstances, reimbursement will only be provided if a requested service(s) is submitted in accordance with the relevant criteria outlined in the applicable Coverage Policy, including covered diagnosis and/or procedure code(s). Reimbursement is not allowed for services when billed for conditions or diagnoses that are not covered under this Coverage Policy (see "Coding Information" below). When billing, providers must use the most appropriate codes as of the effective date of the submission. Claims submitted for services that are not accompanied by covered code(s) under the applicable Coverage Policy will be denied as not covered. 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.

OVERVIEW

Pirfenidone, a pyridone, is indicated for the treatment of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF).¹

The safety and effectiveness of pirfenidone in pediatric patients have not been established.

Disease Overview

IPF is a form of chronic interstitial lung pneumonia associated with histologic pattern of usual interstitial pneumonia (UIP).² The condition is specific for patients that have clinical features and the histologic pattern of UIP or a classical high-resolution computed tomography scan for IPF. In this lung condition there is cellular proliferation, interstitial inflammation, fibrosis, or the combination of these findings, within the alveolar wall that is not due to infection or cancer.³ IPF is rather rare and the prevalence in the US ranges from 10 to 60 cases per 100,000. However, in one study, the prevalence was 494 cases per 100,000 in 2011 in adults > 65 years of age, which is higher than previous information. The disease mainly impacts older adults.² Symptoms include a progressive dry cough and exertional dyspnea. Patients experience a high disease burden with hospital admissions. The clinical course varies among patients but the mean survival after symptom onset is usually 3 to 5 years. The cause is unknown but environmental and occupational hazards may play a role, as well as a history of smoking. Medical therapy is only modestly effective and mainly shows the rate of disease progression. Agents FDA-approved for IPF are Ofev® (nintedanib capsules) and pirfenidone. Lung transplantation is a therapeutic option.

Clinical Efficacy

The efficacy of pirfenidone was assessed in patients with IPF in three Phase III, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, multicenter, multinational trials (n = 1,247).^{1,4,5} Patients were required to have a percent predicted forced vital capacity (%FVC) ≥ 50% at baseline. Pirfenidone 2,403 mg/day led to a statistically significant change in the %FVC at 52 weeks and 72 weeks, respectively. Also, a reduction in the mean decline in forced vital capacity (in mL) was observed in both studies for patients receiving pirfenidone 2,403 mg/day compared with placebo.¹⁻³ Some information suggests that patients who have %FVC < 50% may also have some benefits from therapy.⁶⁻⁹

Guidelines

In 2015, the clinical practice guideline from the American Thoracic Society (ATS), European Respiratory Society (ERS), the Japanese Respiratory Society (JRS), and Latin American Thoracic Association (ALAT) on the treatment of IPF was updated.¹⁰ Regarding pirfenidone, the guideline suggests use of this medication (conditional recommendation, moderate confidence in estimates of effect). The guideline notes that the data with pirfenidone cannot be generalized to patients with IPF who have more severe impairment of pulmonary function tests or for patients with other significant comorbidities.¹⁰ Updated recommendations by this group in 2022 support use of pirfenidone in patients with IPF.¹¹

Coverage Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

Prior Authorization is required for benefit coverage of pirfenidone. All approvals are provided for the duration noted below. Because of the specialized skills required for evaluation and diagnosis of patients treated with pirfenidone, approval requires pirfenidone to be prescribed by or in consultation with a physician who specializes in the condition being treated.

Documentation: Documentation is required where noted in the criteria as **[documentation required]**. Documentation may include, but is not limited to, chart notes, laboratory tests, claims records, and/or other information. All documentation must include patient-specific identifying information.

Pirfenidone is considered medically necessary when the following criteria are met:

FDA-Approved Indication

- 1. Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis.** Approve for 1 year if the patient meets ONE of the following (A or B):
 - A) Initial Therapy.** Approve if the patient meets ALL of the following (i, ii, iii, iv, and v):

Note: Initial therapy refers to a patient who is not currently receiving pirfenidone. Patient may be taking concomitant Jascayd (nerandomilast tablets).

 - i.** Patient is \geq 18 years of age; AND
 - ii.** Forced vital capacity is \geq 40% of the predicted value at baseline [**documentation required**]; AND

Note: Baseline is before a patient has started any antifibrotic therapies. Examples of antifibrotic therapies are pirfenidone capsules and film-coated tablets (Esbriet, generic), Ofev (nintedanib capsules), and Jascayd (nerandomilast tablets).
 - iii.** Diagnosis of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis is confirmed by ONE of the following (a or b):
 - a)** Findings on high-resolution computed tomography indicate usual interstitial pneumonia [**documentation required**]; OR
 - b)** A surgical lung biopsy demonstrates usual interstitial pneumonia [**documentation required**]; AND
 - iv.** Medication is prescribed by or in consultation with a pulmonologist; AND
 - v.** Preferred product criteria is met for the product(s) as listed in the below tables; OR
 - B) Patient is Currently Receiving Pirfenidone.** Approve if the patient meets ALL of the following (i, ii, and iii):
 - i.** Patient is \geq 18 years of age; AND
 - ii.** Patient has experienced a beneficial response to therapy over the last year while receiving pirfenidone; AND

Note: For a patient who has received less than 1 year of therapy, response is from baseline prior to initiating pirfenidone. Examples of a beneficial response include a reduction in the anticipated decline in forced vital capacity, six-minute walk distance, and/or a reduction in the number or severity of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis exacerbations.
 - iii.** Medication is prescribed by or in consultation with a pulmonologist.

Employer Plans:

Product	Criteria
Esbriet capsules (pirfenidone 267 mg capsules)	Approve for 1 year if the patient meets BOTH of the following (A <u>and</u> B): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A) Patient meets the above medical necessity criteria; AND B) Patient meets BOTH of the following (i <u>and</u> ii): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Patient has tried generic pirfenidone [documentation required]; AND ii. Patient cannot take generic pirfenidone due to a formulation difference in the inactive ingredient(s) [e.g., difference in dyes, fillers, preservatives] between the brand and bioequivalent generic product which, per the prescriber, would result in a significant allergy or serious adverse reaction [documentation required].
Esbriet tablets	Approve for 1 year if the patient meets BOTH of the following (A <u>and</u> B): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A) Patient meets the above medical necessity criteria; AND

Product	Criteria
(pirfenidone 267 and 801 mg tablets)	<p>B) Patient meets BOTH of the following (i <u>and</u> ii):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Patient has tried generic pirfenidone [documentation required]; AND ii. Patient cannot take generic pirfenidone due to a formulation difference in the inactive ingredient(s) [e.g., difference in dyes, fillers, preservatives] between the brand and bioequivalent generic product which, per the prescriber, would result in a significant allergy or serious adverse reaction [documentation required].
pirfenidone 534 mg tablet (branded generic)	<p>Approve for 1 year if the patient meets BOTH of the following (A <u>and</u> B):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Patient meets the above medical necessity criteria; AND B) Patient meets BOTH of the following (i <u>and</u> ii): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Patient has tried generic pirfenidone (pirfenidone 267 mg tablets or capsules) [documentation required]; AND ii. Patient cannot take generic pirfenidone due to a formulation difference in the inactive ingredient(s) [e.g., difference in dyes, fillers, preservatives] between the brand and bioequivalent generic product which, per the prescriber, would result in a significant allergy or serious adverse reaction [documentation required].

Individual and Family Plans:

Product	Criteria
Esbriet capsules (pirfenidone 267 mg capsules)	<p>Approve for 1 year if the patient meets BOTH of the following (A <u>and</u> B):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Patient meets the above medical necessity criteria; AND B) Patient meets BOTH of the following (i <u>and</u> ii): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Patient has tried generic pirfenidone [documentation required] [may require prior authorization]; AND ii. Patient cannot take generic pirfenidone due to a formulation difference in the inactive ingredient(s) [e.g., difference in dyes, fillers, preservatives] between the brand and bioequivalent generic product which, per the prescriber, would result in a significant allergy or serious adverse reaction [documentation required].
Esbriet tablets (pirfenidone 267 and 801 mg tablets)	<p>Approve for 1 year if the patient meets BOTH of the following (A <u>and</u> B):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Patient meets the above medical necessity criteria; AND B) Patient meets BOTH of the following (i <u>and</u> ii): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Patient has tried generic pirfenidone [documentation required] [may require prior authorization]; AND ii. Patient cannot take generic pirfenidone due to a formulation difference in the inactive ingredient(s) [e.g., difference in dyes, fillers, preservatives] between the brand and bioequivalent generic product which, per

Product	Criteria
	the prescriber, would result in a significant allergy or serious adverse reaction [documentation required] .
pirfenidone 534 mg tablet (branded generic)	Approve for 1 year if the patient meets BOTH of the following (A and B): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Patient meets the above medical necessity criteria; AND B) Patient meets BOTH of the following (i and ii): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Patient has tried generic pirfenidone (pirfenidone 267 mg tablets or capsules) [documentation required] [may require prior authorization]; AND ii. Patient cannot take generic pirfenidone due to a formulation difference in the inactive ingredient(s) [e.g., difference in dyes, fillers, preservatives] between the brand and bioequivalent generic product which, per the prescriber, would result in a significant allergy or serious adverse reaction [documentation required].

Conditions Not Covered

Pirfenidone for any other use is considered not medically necessary, including the following (this list may not be all inclusive; criteria will be updated as new published data are available):

1. **Pirfenidone is Being Used Concomitantly with Ofev (nintedanib capsules).** Ofev is another medication indicated for the treatment of IPF. The effectiveness and safety of concomitant use of pirfenidone with Ofev have not been established. The 2015 ATS/ERS/JRS/ALAT clinical practice guideline regarding the treatment of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (an update of the 2011 clinical practice guideline) does not recommend taking Ofev and pirfenidone in combination.¹⁰ A small exploratory study was done in which patients with IPF receiving Ofev added on pirfenidone.¹² Further research is needed to determine the utility of this combination regimen.

References

1. Esbriet® capsules and film coated tablets [prescribing information]. South San Francisco, CA: Genentech; February 2023.
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3. Lynch JP, Huynh RH, Fishbein MC, et al. Idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis: epidemiology, clinical features, prognosis, and management. *Semin Respir Crit Care Med*. 2016;37:331-357.
4. King TE, Bradford WZ, Castro-Bernardini S, et al, for the ASCEND Study Group. A phase 3 trial of pirfenidone in patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. *N Engl J Med*. 2014;370(22):2083-2092.
5. Noble PW, Albera C, Bradford WZ, et al, for the CAPACITY Study Group. Pirfenidone in patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (CAPACITY): two randomized trials. *Lancet*. 2011;377:1760-1769.
6. King CS, Nathan SD. POINT: Should all patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, even those with more than moderate impairment, be treated with nintedanib or pirfenidone? Yes. *Chest*. 2016;150(2):273-275 .

7. Nathan SD, Costabel U, Albera C, et al. Pirfenidone in patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and more advanced lung function impairment. *Respir Med.* 2019;153:44-51.
8. Costabel U, Albera C, Glassberg MK, et al. Effect of pirfenidone in patients with more advanced idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. *Respir Research.* 2019;20:55.
9. Richeldi L, Crestani B, Azuma A, et al. Outcomes following decline in forced vital capacity in patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis: results from the INPULSIS and INPULSIS-ON trials of nintedanib. *Respir Med.* 2019;156:20-25.
10. Raghu G, Rochweg B, Zhang Y, et al, on behalf of the ATS, ERS, JRS, and ALAT. An official ATS/ERS/JRS/ALAT clinical practice guideline: treatment of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. Executive summary. An update of the 2011 clinical practice guideline. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med.* 2015;192(2):238-248.
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12. Vancheri C, Kreuter M, Richeldi L, et al, INJOURNEY trial investigators. Nintedanib with add-on pirfenidone in idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis: results of the INJOURNEY trial. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med.* 2018;197(3):356-363.

Revision Details

Type of Revision	Summary of Changes	Date
Annual Revision	<p>Updated policy name from “Pirfenidone” to “Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis and Related Lung Disease – Pirfenidone.”</p> <p>Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis – Initial Therapy. Removed the requirement for both high-resolution computed tomography and biopsy pattern to indicate “probable” usual interstitial pneumonia.</p> <p>Removed the criterion to exclude other potential causes of interstitial lung disease.</p> <p>Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis – Patient is Currently Receiving Pirfenidone. Added a note stating that for patients who have received less than 1 year of therapy, the beneficial response is from baseline prior to initiating pirfenidone.</p>	10/15/2024
Annual Revision	<p>Updated Policy Statement.</p> <p>The requirement that a patient cannot take generic pirfenidone was updated to state that this was due to a formulation difference in the inactive ingredient(s) [e.g., difference in dyes, fillers, preservatives] between the brand and bioequivalent generic product which, per the prescriber, would result in a significant allergy or serious adverse reaction [documentation required]. Previously it stated that patient has experienced inadequate efficacy or significant intolerance, according to the prescriber [documentation required].</p> <p>Added documentation requirements throughout policy.</p>	10/01/2025

Selected Revision	<p>Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis. A Note was added to clarify that initial therapy refers to a patient who is not currently receiving pirfenidone. The patient may be taking concomitant Jascayd (nerandomilast tablets). The requirement regarding forced vital capacity \geq 40% was clarified to state at baseline. A Note was added to clarify that baseline is before a patient has started antifibrotic therapies. The examples of antifibrotic therapies were added which Ofev (nintedanib capsules), Jascayd, or pirfenidone capsules and film-coated tablets (Esbriet, generic).</p>	2/1/2026
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The policy effective date is in force until updated or retired.

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