

Clinical Policy: Emtricitabine/Tenofovir Alafenamide (Descovy)

Reference Number: CP.PMN.235

Effective Date: 06.01.20

Last Review Date: 05.25

Line of Business: Commercial, HIM, Medicaid

[Revision Log](#)

See [Important Reminder](#) at the end of this policy for important regulatory and legal information.

Description

Emtricitabine/tenofovir alafenamide (Descovy[®]) is a combination of two nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs).

FDA Approved Indication(s)

Descovy is indicated:

- In combination with other antiretroviral agents for the treatment of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)-1 infection in adults and pediatric patients weighing at least 35 kg
- In combination with other antiretroviral agents other than protease inhibitors that require a CYP3A inhibitor for the treatment of HIV-1 infection in pediatric patients weighing at least 14 kg and less than 35 kg
- In at-risk adults and adolescents weighing at least 35 kg for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to reduce the risk of HIV-1 infection from sexual acquisition, excluding individuals at risk from receptive vaginal sex. Individuals must have a negative HIV-1 test immediately prior to initiating Descovy for HIV-1 PrEP

Limitation(s) of use: The indication does not include use of Descovy in individuals at risk of HIV-1 from receptive vaginal sex because effectiveness in this population has not been evaluated.

Policy/Criteria

Provider must submit documentation (such as office chart notes, lab results or other clinical information) supporting that member has met all approval criteria.

It is the policy of health plans affiliated with Centene Corporation[®] that Descovy is **medically necessary** when the following criteria are met:

I. Initial Approval Criteria

A. HIV-1 Infection (must meet all)*:

*For members in Nevada, medical management techniques, including quantity management, beyond step therapy is not allowed.

1. Diagnosis of HIV-1 infection;
2. Descovy is prescribed in combination with other antiretroviral agents for the treatment of HIV-1 infection;
3. Member weighs ≥ 14 kg;
4. If treatment-naïve and member weighs ≥ 17 kg, member must instead use emtricitabine/tenofovir disoproxil fumarate (generic Truvada[®]), unless

contraindicated, clinically significant adverse effects are experienced, or member has bone/renal co-morbidities or risk factors (*see Appendix D*);*

**For Illinois HIM requests, the step therapy requirements above do not apply as of 1/1/2026 per IL HB 5395*

5. Dose does not exceed (a or b):
 - a. Weight 14 kg to < 25 kg: 120/15 mg (1 tablet) per day;
 - b. Weight \geq 25 kg: 200/25 mg (1 tablet) per day.

Approval duration: 12 months

B. Pre-exposure HIV Prophylaxis (must meet all)*:

**For members in Nevada, medical management techniques, including quantity management, beyond step therapy is not allowed.*

1. Member is HIV-negative and has no signs or symptoms of acute HIV infection;
2. Member is considered at risk for acquiring HIV and meets one of the following (a, b, or c):
 - a. Engaging in sexual activity with a HIV-1 infected partner;
 - b. Engaging in sexual activity and one or more of the following (i-vi):
 - i. Inconsistent or no condom use;
 - ii. Diagnosis of sexually transmitted infections;
 - iii. Exchange of sex for commodities;
 - iv. Incarceration;
 - v. Not in a monogamous partnership;
 - vi. Partner of unknown HIV status with any of the preceding risk factors;
 - c. Use of illicit injection drugs;
3. Member weighs \geq 35 kg;
4. Dose does not exceed 200/25 mg (1 tablet) per day.

Approval duration: 12 months

C. Other diagnoses/indications (must meet 1 or 2):

1. If this drug has recently (within the last 6 months) undergone a label change (e.g., newly approved indication, age expansion, new dosing regimen) that is not yet reflected in this policy, refer to one of the following policies (a or b):
 - a. For drugs on the formulary (commercial, health insurance marketplace) or PDL (Medicaid), the no coverage criteria policy for the relevant line of business: CP.CPA.190 for commercial, HIM.PA.33 for health insurance marketplace, and CP.PMN.255 for Medicaid; or
 - b. For drugs NOT on the formulary (commercial, health insurance marketplace) or PDL (Medicaid), the non-formulary policy for the relevant line of business: CP.CPA.190 for commercial, HIM.PA.103 for health insurance marketplace, and CP.PMN.16 for Medicaid; or
2. If the requested use (e.g., diagnosis, age, dosing regimen) is NOT specifically listed under section III (Diagnoses/Indications for which coverage is NOT authorized) AND criterion 1 above does not apply, refer to the off-label use policy for the relevant line of business: CP.CPA.09 for commercial, HIM.PA.154 for health insurance marketplace, and CP.PMN.53 for Medicaid.

II. Continued Therapy*

*For members in Nevada, medical management techniques, including quantity management, beyond step therapy is not allowed.

A. All Indications in Section I (must meet all):

1. Currently receiving medication via Centene benefit, or documentation supports that member is currently receiving Descovy for a covered indication and has received this medication for at least 30 days;
2. Member is responding positively to therapy;
3. If request is for a dose increase, new dose does not exceed (a or b):
 - a. Request for the treatment of HIV-1 infection in member weighing 14 kg to < 25 kg: 120/15 mg (1 tablet) per day;
 - b. All other requests: 200/25 mg (1 tablet) per day.

Approval duration: 12 months

B. Other diagnoses/indications (must meet 1 or 2):

1. If this drug has recently (within the last 6 months) undergone a label change (e.g., newly approved indication, age expansion, new dosing regimen) that is not yet reflected in this policy, refer to one of the following policies (a or b):
 - a. For drugs on the formulary (commercial, health insurance marketplace) or PDL (Medicaid), the no coverage criteria policy for the relevant line of business: CP.CPA.190 for commercial, HIM.PA.33 for health insurance marketplace, and CP.PMN.255 for Medicaid; or
 - b. For drugs NOT on the formulary (commercial, health insurance marketplace) or PDL (Medicaid), the non-formulary policy for the relevant line of business: CP.CPA.190 for commercial, HIM.PA.103 for health insurance marketplace, and CP.PMN.16 for Medicaid; or
2. If the requested use (e.g., diagnosis, age, dosing regimen) is NOT specifically listed under section III (Diagnoses/Indications for which coverage is NOT authorized) AND criterion 1 above does not apply, refer to the off-label use policy for the relevant line of business: CP.CPA.09 for commercial, HIM.PA.154 for health insurance marketplace, and CP.PMN.53 for Medicaid.

III. Diagnoses/Indications for which coverage is NOT authorized:

- A. Non-FDA approved indications, which are not addressed in this policy, unless there is sufficient documentation of efficacy and safety according to the off label use policies – CP.CPA.09 for commercial, HIM.PA.154 for health insurance marketplace, and CP.PMN.53 for Medicaid, or evidence of coverage documents.

IV. Appendices/General Information

Appendix A: Abbreviation/Acronym Key

FDA: Food and Drug Administration

HIV: human immunodeficiency virus

PrEP: pre-exposure prophylaxis

Appendix B: Therapeutic Alternatives

Drug Name	Dosing Regimen	Dose Limit/ Maximum Dose
Truvada (emtricitabine/ tenofovir disoproxil fumarate)	<u>HIV-1 Infection:</u> Adults and pediatric patients weighing ≥ 35 kg: 200/300 mg PO QD Pediatric patients weighing between 17 to < 35 kg: 17 kg to < 22 kg: 100/150 mg PO QD 22 kg to < 28 kg: 133/200 mg PO QD 28 kg to < 35 kg: 167/250 mg PO QD	See regimen

Therapeutic alternatives are listed as Brand name[®] (generic) when the drug is available by brand name only and generic (Brand name[®]) when the drug is available by both brand and generic.

Appendix C: Contraindications/Boxed Warnings

- Contraindication(s): HIV-1 PrEP in individuals with unknown or positive HIV-1 status
- Boxed warning (s): post-treatment acute exacerbation of hepatitis b and risk of drug resistance with use of Descovy for HIV-1 PrEP in undiagnosed early HIV-1 infection

Appendix D: General Information

- Tenofovir is available in two forms: tenofovir alafenamide (TAF; found in Descovy) and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate (TDF; found in Truvada). TAF is associated with fewer bone and renal toxicities than TDF, while TDF is associated with lower lipid levels. According to the Department of Health and Human Services guidelines for the use of antiretroviral agents in adults and adolescents with HIV, safety, cost, and accessibility are among the factors to consider when choosing between these drugs. One form is not preferred over the other.
- Examples of bone/renal co-morbidities and risk factors include but are not limited to:
 - Bone disease: osteoporosis, osteopenia, receiving chronic corticosteroids or other therapies known to decrease bone density (e.g., aromatase inhibitors, androgen deprivation therapy, doxorubicin, cyclophosphamide), frail/underweight
 - Renal disease: chronic kidney disease, estimated creatinine clearance < 60 mL/min, albuminuria, family history of kidney disease, diabetes, receiving nephrotoxic medications

V. Dosage and Administration

Indication	Dosing Regimen	Maximum Dose
HIV-1 infection	Adults and pediatric patients weighing ≥ 25 kg: 200/25 mg PO QD Pediatric patients weighing between 14 kg to < 25 kg: 120/15 mg PO QD	See regimen
PrEP	200/25 mg PO QD	200/25 mg/day

VI. Product Availability

Tablets: 200 mg emtricitabine/25 mg tenofovir alafenamide, 120 mg emtricitabine/15 mg tenofovir alafenamide

VII. References

1. Descovy Prescribing Information. Foster City, CA: Gilead Sciences, Inc.; January 2022. Available at www.descovyhcp.com. Accessed February 14, 2025.
2. Panel on Antiretroviral Guidelines for Adults and Adolescents. Guidelines for the use of antiretroviral agents in adults and adolescents living with HIV. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at: <https://clinicalinfo.hiv.gov/en/guidelines/hiv-clinical-guidelines-adult-and-adolescent-arv/whats-new-guidelines>. Updated September 12, 2024. Accessed February 14, 2025.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Public Health Service. Preexposure prophylaxis for the prevention of HIV infection in the United States - 2021 update. 2021. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/hivpartners/php/guidelines/index.html>. Accessed February 14, 2025.

Reviews, Revisions, and Approvals	Date	P&T Approval Date
2Q 2021 annual review: no significant changes; specified that the generic form of Truvada should be tried when available; revised “medical justification” to “must use” language; references to HIM.PHAR.21 revised to HIM.PA.154; references reviewed and updated.	01.12.21	05.21
2Q 2022 annual review: no significant changes; RT4: updated criteria to reflect pediatric weight extension to 14+ kg and added lower-strength tablet; references reviewed and updated.	01.20.22	05.22
Template changes applied to other diagnoses/indications.	10.06.22	
2Q 2023 annual review: no significant changes; references reviewed and updated.	01.23.23	05.23
2Q 2024 annual review: no significant changes; references reviewed and updated.	02.01.24	05.24
Added disclaimer that medical management techniques, including quantity management, beyond step therapy is not allowed for members in NV per SB 439.	06.04.24	
Removed redirection to generic Truvada per USPSTF PrEP recommendation.	01.07.25	02.25
2Q 2025 annual review: no significant changes; references reviewed and updated. Added step therapy bypass for IL HIM per IL HB 5395.	02.14.25	05.25

Important Reminder

This clinical policy has been developed by appropriately experienced and licensed health care professionals based on a review and consideration of currently available generally accepted standards of medical practice; peer-reviewed medical literature; government agency/program approval status; evidence-based guidelines and positions of leading national health professional organizations; views of physicians practicing in relevant clinical areas affected by this clinical policy; and other available clinical information. The Health Plan makes no representations and accepts no liability with respect to the content of any external information used or relied upon in

developing this clinical policy. This clinical policy is consistent with standards of medical practice current at the time that this clinical policy was approved. “Health Plan” means a health plan that has adopted this clinical policy and that is operated or administered, in whole or in part, by Centene Management Company, LLC, or any of such health plan’s affiliates, as applicable.

The purpose of this clinical policy is to provide a guide to medical necessity, which is a component of the guidelines used to assist in making coverage decisions and administering benefits. It does not constitute a contract or guarantee regarding payment or results. Coverage decisions and the administration of benefits are subject to all terms, conditions, exclusions, and limitations of the coverage documents (e.g., evidence of coverage, certificate of coverage, policy, contract of insurance, etc.), as well as to state and federal requirements and applicable Health Plan-level administrative policies and procedures.

This clinical policy is effective as of the date determined by the Health Plan. The date of posting may not be the effective date of this clinical policy. This clinical policy may be subject to applicable legal and regulatory requirements relating to provider notification. If there is a discrepancy between the effective date of this clinical policy and any applicable legal or regulatory requirement, the requirements of law and regulation shall govern. The Health Plan retains the right to change, amend or withdraw this clinical policy, and additional clinical policies may be developed and adopted as needed, at any time.

This clinical policy does not constitute medical advice, medical treatment, or medical care. It is not intended to dictate to providers how to practice medicine. Providers are expected to exercise professional medical judgment in providing the most appropriate care, and are solely responsible for the medical advice and treatment of members. This clinical policy is not intended to recommend treatment for members. Members should consult with their treating physician in connection with diagnosis and treatment decisions.

Providers referred to in this clinical policy are independent contractors who exercise independent judgment and over whom the Health Plan has no control or right of control. Providers are not agents or employees of the Health Plan.

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Note:

For Medicaid members, when state Medicaid coverage provisions conflict with the coverage provisions in this clinical policy, state Medicaid coverage provisions take precedence. Please refer to the state Medicaid manual for any coverage provisions pertaining to this clinical policy.

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Emtricitabine/Tenofovir Alafenamide



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