Harvard Pilgrim Health Care | TUFTS Health Plan

Medical Necessity Guidelines
Medical Benefit Drugs

Abecma® (idecabtagene vicleucel)

Effective: September 1, 2026

Prior Authorization Required If REQUIRED, submit supporting clinical documentation pertinent to service request.	Yes ☒ No ☐

Applies to:

Commercial Products

☐ Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Commercial products; Fax 617-673-0988
☐ Tufts Health Plan Commercial products; Fax 617-673-0988
CareLink℠ – Refer to CareLink Procedures, Services and Items Requiring Prior Authorization

Public Plans Products

☐ Tufts Health Direct – A Massachusetts Qualified Health Plan (QHP) (a commercial product); Fax 617-673-0988
☐ Tufts Health Together – MassHealth MCO Plan and Accountable Care Partnership Plans; Fax 617-673-0939
☐ Tufts Health RITogether – A Rhode Island Medicaid Plan; Fax 617-673-0939
☒ Tufts Health One Care-- A dual-eligible product; Fax 617-673-0956

Senior Products

☒ Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Stride Medicare Advantage; Fax 617-673-0956
☒ Tufts Health Plan Senior Care Options (SCO), (a dual-eligible product); Fax 617-673-0956
☒ Tufts Medicare Preferred HMO, (a Medicare Advantage product); Fax 617-673-0956
☒ Tufts Medicare Preferred PPO, (a Medicare Advantage product); Fax 617-673-0956

Note: While you may not be the provider responsible for obtaining prior authorization, as a condition of payment you will need to ensure that prior authorization has been obtained.

Overview

Chimeric antigen receptor T-cell therapy (CAR-T cell therapy), a type of immunotherapy which may also be referred to as adoptive T-cell therapy, attempts to program patients' own immune systems to recognize and attack cancer cells. The first step in this therapy is to remove T-cells from the patient via apheresis, a process that removes blood from the body and removes one or more blood components (such as white blood cells, plasma, or platelets). The remaining blood is then returned to the body. The T-cells are then sent to a drug manufacturing facility or laboratory where they are genetically engineered to produce chimeric antigen receptors (CARs) on their surface. These CARs are what allow the T-cells to recognize an antigen on targeted tumor cells. The genetically modified T-cells are grown in the lab until there are enough of them (many millions) to freeze and return to the center treating the patient. There they are infused into the recipient with the expectation that the CAR-T cells will recognize and kill cancerous cells that have the targeted antigen on their surface. Since the CAR-T cells may remain in the body long after the infusion, it is possible the treatment can bring about long-term remission. CAR-T cell therapy can be used to treat certain hematologic malignancies when the disease is relapsed or refractory to standard line(s) of treatment.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Approved Indications:

- Abecma (idecabtagene vicleucel) is indicated for the treatment of adult patients with relapsed or refractory multiple myeloma after two or more prior lines of therapy including an immunomodulatory agent, a proteasome inhibitor, and an anti-CD38 monoclonal antibody.
- **NOTE**: According to recent updated guidance from the FDA, the REMS Program requirement is no longer required.[1]
- **NOTE**: Tocilizumab must be available to treat potential serious adverse reactions as needed.

The Plan uses guidance from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and MassHealth for coverage determinations for its Dual Product Eligible plan members, and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for coverage determinations for its Medicare Advantage plan members. CMS National Coverage Determinations (NCDs), Local Coverage Determinations

(LCDs), Local Coverage Articles (LCAs) and documentation included in the Medicare manuals and MassHealth Medical Necessity Determinations are the basis for coverage determinations where available. For the Plan's members, the following criteria is used: Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T- cell Therapy NCD 110.24

Clinical Guideline Coverage Criteria

The Plan may cover Abecma when all the following clinical criteria is met:

1. The Member is 18 years of age or older and has been diagnosed with relapsed* or refractory* multiple myeloma.

AND

2. The Member has received treatment with two or more prior lines of therapy including an immunomodulatory agent, a proteasome inhibitor, and an anti-CD38 monoclonal antibody.

AND

3. The Member has not received prior treatment with CAR-T therapy.

*Relapsed/Refractory defined as disease progression after the last treatment regimen or refractory/suboptimal response to the most recent therapy

Note: Documentation submitted must list previous lines of treatment/systemic therapies and date of each therapy.

In addition to the above criteria, the Plan may cover Abecma in an outpatient setting when the provider attests that they have assessed the Member and determined that outpatient administration is clinically appropriate.

Note: Prior authorization for Abecma is required regardless of hospital inpatient or outpatient setting.

Limitations

- Authorization for Abecma is limited to a one-time infusion.
- Members who have had prior treatment with any form of CAR-T cell therapy, including therapies in clinical trial settings, will not be approved for additional CAR-T therapy.
- All other indications other than those listed above are considered experimental/investigational and not medically necessary.

Codes

The following code(s) require prior authorization:

Table 1: HCPCS Codes

HCPCS Codes	Description
Q2055	Idecabtagene vicleucel, up to 460 million autologous B-cell maturation antigens (BCMA) directed CAR-positive T cells, including leukapheresis and dose preparation procedures, per therapeutic dose

References:

1. FDA Eliminates Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies (REMS) for Autologous Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T cell Immunotherapies. https://www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/safety-availability-biologics/fda-eliminates-risk-evaluation-and-mitigation-strategies-rems-autologous-chimeric-antigen-receptor. Published June 26, 2025. Accessed June 26, 2025.
2. Abecma [package insert]. Summit, NJ: Celgene Corporation; March 2021.
3. Center for Medicare and Medicaid National Coverage Determination (NCD) for Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell Therapy. https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/view/ncd.aspx?ncdid=374&bc=CAAAAAAAAAAA .
4. Hayes, Inc. Medical Technology Directory Report. Adoptive Immunotherapy Using Genetically Modified Lymphocytes for Lymphoproliferative Disorders and Hematological Malignancies. September 7, 2017. Available at hayesinc.com. Last accessed October 26, 2017.United States Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute. CAR-T Cells: Engineering Patients' Immune Cells to Treat Their Cancers. Available at cancer.gov Last accessed October 24, 2017.
5. Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-Cell Therapy Facts. Available at lls.org. Last accessed October 20, 2017.
6. Hansen, D. K., Liu, Y. H., Ranjan, S., Bhandari, H., Potluri, R., McFarland, L., De Braganca, K. C., & Huo, S. (2023). The Impact of Outpatient versus Inpatient Administration of CAR-T Therapies on Clinical, Economic, and Humanistic Outcomes in Patients with Hematological Cancer: A Systematic Literature Review. *Cancers*, *15*(24), 5746.

https://doi.org/10.3390/cancers15245746
7. Sidana S, et. al. Idecabtagene vicleucel manufacturing and clinical value of out of specification products in relapsed and refractory MM. Blood Adv. 2026 Mar 27:bloodadvances.2025017186. doi: 10.1182/bloodadvances.2025017186. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 41894689.
8. Caillot L, et. al. Early Chimeric Antigen Receptor T Cell Expansion Is Associated with Prolonged Progression-Free Survival for Patients with Relapsed/Refractory Multiple Myeloma Treated with Ide-Cel: A Retrospective Monocentric Study. Transplant Cell Ther. 2024 Jun;30(6):630.e1-630.e8. doi: 10.1016/j.jtct.2024.03.003. Epub 2024 Mar 7. PMID: 38458477.
9. Ailawadhi S, Arnulf B, Patel KK, et al. KarMMa-3 subgroup analysis in older patients with relapsed/refractory multiple myeloma treated with idecabtagene vicleucel. Blood. 2025;146(Suppl 1):2297. doi:10.1182/blood-2025-2297Sidana S, et. al. Standard-of-care idecabtagene vicleucel for relapsed/refractory multiple myeloma. Blood. 2025 Jul 10;146(2):167-177. doi: 10.1182/blood.2024026216. PMID: 40198886; PMCID: PMC12964216.
10. Patel N, Farid S, Gomes M. Cost-Effectiveness of Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-Cell Therapy for Blood Cancers: An Updated Systematic Review. Pharmacoecon Open. 2026 Jan;10(1):35-51. doi: 10.1007/s41669-025-00614-x. Epub 2025 Dec 15. PMID: 41396346; PMCID: PMC12796026.

Approval And Revision History

September 21, 2022: Reviewed by the Medical Policy Approval Committee (MPAC)
Subsequent endorsement date(s) and changes made:

- Originally approved at September 21, 2022 MPAC effective January 1, 2023
- Administrative update: November 2023 added Medical Benefit Drugs to title, updated MATogether and RITogether fax numbers to 617-673-0939, changed Unify name to One Care, clarified NCD language effective January 1, 2024
- November 16, 2023: Reviewed by MPAC, renewed without changes effective January 1, 2024
- December 1, 2023: Reviewed and approved by UM Committee effective January 1, 2024
- January 17, 2024: Reviewed by MPAC, added criteria for allow for outpatient administration and updated references effective Match 1, 2024
- May 15, 2024: Reviewed by MPAC, moved from fourth line treatment to third line treatment effective July 1, 2024
- June 13, 2024; Reviewed and approved by UM Committee effective July 1, 2024
- December 13, 2024: Reviewed by UM Committee; Coding updated: Removal of prior authorization from 0537T, 0538T, 0539T, and 0540T. Effective January 1, 2025.
- December 18, 2024: Reviewed by MPAC; Coding updated: Removal of prior authorization from 0537T, 0538T, 0539T, and 0540T. Effective January 1, 2025.
- June 18, 2025: Reviewed by MPAC. Annual Review.
- July 16, 2025: Reviewed by MPAC. REMS language removed from both Overview and Criteria sections. Two notes were added in the Overview section. References updated. Effective date September 1, 2025.
- July 15, 2026: Reviewed by MPAC. Annual Review. References updated. Effective September 1, 2026.

Background, Product and Disclaimer Information

Medical Necessity Guidelines are developed to determine coverage for benefits and are published to provide a better understanding of the basis upon which coverage decisions are made. We make coverage decisions using these guidelines, along with the Member's benefit document, and in coordination with the Member's physician(s) on a case-by-case basis considering the individual Member's health care needs.

Medical Necessity Guidelines are developed for selected therapeutic or diagnostic services found to be safe and proven effective in a limited, defined population of patients or clinical circumstances. They include concise clinical coverage criteria based on current literature review, consultation with practicing physicians in our service area who are medical experts in the particular field, FDA and other government agency policies, and standards adopted by national accreditation organizations. We revise and update Medical Necessity Guidelines annually, or more frequently if new evidence becomes available that suggests needed revisions.

For self-insured plans, coverage may vary depending on the terms of the benefit document. If a discrepancy exists between a Medical Necessity Guideline and a self-insured Member's benefit document, the provisions of the benefit document will govern. For Tufts Health Together (Medicaid), coverage may be available beyond these guidelines for pediatric members under age 21 under the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) benefits of the plan in accordance with 130 CMR 450.140 and 130 CMR 447.000, and with prior authorization.

Treating providers are solely responsible for the medical advice and treatment of Members. The use of this guideline is not a guarantee of payment or a final prediction of how specific claim(s) will be adjudicated. Claims payment is subject to eligibility and benefits on the date of service, coordination of benefits, referral/authorization, utilization management guidelines when applicable, and adherence to plan policies, plan procedures, and claims editing logic.