
5.90.003

Section:	Prescription Drugs	Effective Date:	October 1, 2025
Subsection:	Topical Products	Original Policy Date:	December 7, 2011
Subject:	Tretinoin	Page:	1 of 6

Last Review Date: September 19, 2025

Tretinoin

Description

Aklief (trifarotene), Altreno (tretinoin), Atralin (tretinoin), Avita (tretinoin), Cabtreo* (adapalene + benzoyl peroxide + clindamycin phosphate), Differin (adapalene), Epiduo (adapalene + benzoyl peroxide), Refissa (tretinoin), Plixda** (adapalene), Renova (tretinoin), Retin-A (tretinoin), Tretin-X (tretinoin), Twyneo (tretinoin + benzoyl peroxide), Veltin (tretinoin + clindamycin), Ziana (tretinoin + clindamycin phosphate)

*Prior authorization for the brand formulation applies only to formulary exceptions due to being a non-covered medication.

**This medication is included in this policy but is not available on the market as of yet

Background

Tretinoin is a retinoid medication derived from vitamin A used to treat both non-inflammatory and inflammatory types of acne, including blackheads, whiteheads, papules, pustules, and nodules (1-4).

Tretinoin products may also be used for cosmetic purposes such as treatment for wrinkles, fine lines and solar or photo aging. These indications are excluded from plan coverage.

Regulatory Status

FDA approved indication: Tretinoin products are indicated for the topical treatment of acne vulgaris (5-23).

Section:	Prescription Drugs	Effective Date:	October 1, 2025
Subsection:	Topical Products	Original Policy Date:	December 7, 2011
Subject:	Tretinoin	Page:	2 of 6

Off-Label Use:

Tretinoin products are also indicated topically to treat malignant and pre-malignant skin conditions in high risk patients with actinic keratosis, basal and squamous cell carcinoma. Current FDA approved options for the treatment of high-risk patients with basal and squamous cell cancers include hedgehog pathway inhibitors, intralesional chemotherapy, and other established treatment options (3).

Some products have cosmetic indications which are excluded from coverage (5-23).

Related policies

Aczone, Tazarotene, Winlevi

Policy

This policy statement applies to clinical review performed for pre-service (Prior Approval, Precertification, Advanced Benefit Determination, etc.) and/or post-service claims.

Tretinoin may be considered **medically necessary** if the conditions indicated below are met.

Tretinoin may be considered **investigational** for all other indications.

Prior-Approval Requirements

Age **Cabtreo only:** 9 years of age or older
 All other medications: 35 years of age or older

Diagnoses

Patient must have **ONE** of the following:

1. Acne vulgaris
 - a. Comedones
 - b. Cysts (eruptive vellus hair cyst, cystic acne)
 - c. Papules
 - d. Pustules
2. Acne conglobata

Section:	Prescription Drugs	Effective Date:	October 1, 2025
Subsection:	Topical Products	Original Policy Date:	December 7, 2011
Subject:	Tretinoin	Page:	3 of 6

3. Patient is at high risk (i.e., immunocompromised, post organ transplant) with one of the following diagnoses:
- a. Actinic keratosis
 - b. Basal cell carcinoma
 - c. Squamous cell carcinoma

Prior – Approval *Renewal* Requirements

Same as above

Policy Guidelines

Pre – PA Allowance

Age Age 9-34: no restriction
Age 0-8 and 35 years or older: no Pre-PA allowance

Prior - Approval Limits

Duration 12 months

Prior – Approval *Renewal* Limits

Same as above

Rationale

Summary

Tretinoin is a retinoid derived from vitamin A used for the topical treatment of patients with acne vulgaris and acne conglobata. Tretinoin is also used in the topical treatment of skin conditions in high risk patients (i.e., immunocompromised, post organ transplant) such as actinic keratosis, basal cell carcinoma, and squamous cell carcinoma (5-23).

Prior approval is required to ensure the safe, clinically appropriate, and cost-effective use of tretinoin while maintaining optimal therapeutic outcomes.

References

1. Kraft J, Freiman A. Management of acne. CMAJ 2011;183(7):E430-35.
2. Odom R. Managing actinic keratoses with retinoids. J Am Acad Dermatol 1998;39:S74-8.

Section:	Prescription Drugs	Effective Date:	October 1, 2025
Subsection:	Topical Products	Original Policy Date:	December 7, 2011
Subject:	Tretinoin	Page:	4 of 6

3. Lever L, Marks R. Topical retinoid treatment for skin cancer: a review [abstract]. *Skin Pharmacol.* 1991;4(3):125-31. PMID:1768423.
4. Mayra Ianhez, Luiz Fernando Fróes Fleury, Junior, Hélio Amante Miot, and Edileia Bagatin. Retinoids for prevention and treatment of actinic keratosis. *An Bras Dermatol.* 2013 Jul-Aug; 88(4): 585–593.
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site.
http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/molluscum/clinical_overview.htm. Accessed January 30, 2021.
6. Aklief [package insert]. Fort Worth, TX: Galderma Laboratories, L.P.; October 2019.
7. Altreno Lotion [package insert]. Bridgewater, NJ: Bausch Health US, LLC; March 2020.
8. Atralin Gel [package insert]. Bridgewater, NJ: Valeant Pharmaceuticals North America LLC; July 2016.
9. Avita Cream [package insert]. Morgantown, WV: Mylan Pharmaceuticals Inc; July 2018.
10. Avita Gel [package insert]. Morgantown, WV: Mylan Pharmaceuticals Inc; January 2018.
11. Differin Gel [package insert]. Fort Worth, TX: Galderma Laboratories, L.P.; September 2020.
12. Epiduo Gel [package insert]. Fort Worth, TX: Galderma Laboratories, L.P.; February 2018.
13. Epiduo FORTE [package insert]. Fort Worth, TX: Galderma Laboratories, L.P.; July 2015.
14. Plixda [package insert]. Charleston, SC: Marnel Pharmaceuticals, Inc.; August 2018.
15. Refissa [package insert]. San Diego, CA: Suneva Medical, Inc.; January 2014.
16. Renova [package insert]. Bridgewater, NJ: Bausch Health US LLC; September 2019.
17. Retin-A Cream/Gel [package insert]. Bridgewater, NJ: Bausch Health US, LLC; September 2019.
18. Retin-A Micro [package insert]. Bridgewater, NJ: Valeant Pharmaceuticals North America LLC; October 2017.
19. Tretin-X [package insert]. Cranford, NJ: Triax Pharmaceuticals, LLC; October 2013.
20. Twyneo [package insert]. Fort Worth, TX: Galderma Laboratories, L.P.; July 2021.
21. Veltin [package insert]. Exton, PA: Almirall, LLC; June 2019.
22. Ziana [package insert]. Bridgewater, NJ: Valeant Pharmaceuticals North America LLC; March 2017.
23. Cabtreo [package insert]. Bridgewater, NJ: Bausch Health US, LLC; October 2023.

Policy History

Date	Action
March 2009	Added Epiduo to Retinoid criteria and corrected “miliun” spelling
July 2009	Add Refissa (tretinoin 0.05% cream) to PA as a line extension. (NOTE: Refissa is only FDA-approved for cosmetic purposes; however, other

Section:	Prescription Drugs	Effective Date:	October 1, 2025
Subsection:	Topical Products	Original Policy Date:	December 7, 2011
Subject:	Tretinoin	Page:	5 of 6

	tretinoin 0.05% products that are approved for acne are assigned the same GCN used in claim adjudication.)
August 2009	Addition of Ziana (tretinoin 0.025% + clindamycin 1.2% gel) for treatment of acne
April 2010	Addition of Differin 0.1% lotion, which is FDA approved for the same indications as the Differin gel and Differin cream
October 2010	Addition of Veltin (tretinoin 0.025% + clindamycin 1.2% gel) for treatment of acne
December 2012	Annual review and update
June 2014	Annual editorial review and reference update Removed non-supported diagnoses: Grover's disease, Kyrle's disease, Keratosis Follicularis and Molluscum contagiosum Addition of high-risk requirement for actinic keratosis, basal and squamous cell carcinoma per SME Addition of Retin-A Micro Pump 0.8% gel
September 2015	Annual editorial review and reference update
December 2016	Annual editorial review and reference update Policy number change from 5.14.03 to 5.90.03
September 2017	Annual editorial review and reference update
September 2018	Annual editorial review and reference update
October 2018	Addition of Altreno lotion
November 2018	Annual review and reference update
March 2019	Annual review. Addition of Plixda topical solution. Revised off-label use statement and changed Pre-PA allowance to age 9-34 only per SME
November 2019	Addition of Aklief
December 2019	Annual review
March 2020	Annual review
March 2021	Annual editorial review and reference update
December 2021	Annual review
June 2022	Annual review. Addition of Twyneo cream to policy per FEP
September 2023	Annual review. Changed policy number to 5.90.003
February 2023	Added Cabtreo gel to the policy as product requiring formulary exception and PA
September 2024	Annual review
September 2025	Annual review

Keywords

5.90.003

Section: Prescription Drugs

Effective Date: October 1, 2025

Subsection: Topical Products

Original Policy Date: December 7, 2011

Subject: Tretinoin

Page: 6 of 6

This policy was approved by the FEP® Pharmacy and Medical Policy Committee on September 19, 2025 and is effective on October 1, 2025.