

Blue Shield Medical Policy on Evaluating New Technologies and Pharmaceuticals

The Blue Shield Medical Policy Committee reviews new and emerging technologies (both devices and procedures) for medical and behavioral health indications, and new applications for existing technologies. The committee meets at least four times each year, consulting experts and inviting them on an as-needed basis to the committee. Pharmaceuticals are managed through our Pharmacy and Therapeutics (P&T) Committee. The committee monitors the emergence of new technologies (and new uses for existing technologies) on an ongoing basis to ensure timely availability of appropriate policies.

The primary sources of the technology evaluations are derived from the BlueCross BlueShield Association Technology Evaluation Center (bcbs.com), the BlueCross BlueShield Association Medical Policy Reference Panel, and the California Technology Assessment Forum (ctaf.org).

When clinical studies and trials, peer review scientific data, and journal literature provide sufficient credible evidence demonstrating safety and efficacy, the committee will consider a technology eligible for coverage, when medically necessary. To be eligible for coverage, the technology must meet all of the assessment criteria:

1. The medical technology must have final approval from the appropriate government regulatory bodies.
2. The scientific evidence must permit conclusions concerning the effectiveness of the technology on health outcomes.
3. The technology must improve the net health outcome.
4. The technology must be as beneficial as established alternatives.
5. The improvement must be attainable outside experimental/investigational settings.

Note: Benefit and eligibility criteria supersede medical necessity determinations.

Medical policies are general statements of coverage for Blue Shield as a company. Unless a specific regulatory requirement (state or federal) or a plan-specific benefit or limitation applies, medical policies are applied to individuals covered by Blue Shield.