



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

PHARMACY COVERAGE GUIDELINES
SECTION: DRUGS

ORIGINAL EFFECTIVE DATE: 10/31/2014
LAST REVIEW DATE: 8/19/2021
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ALLERGEN IMMUNOTHERAPY SUBLINGUAL TABLETS:

- **GRASTEK[®]** (Timothy Grass pollen allergen extract)
- **ODACTRA[™]** House Dust Mite (*Dermatophagoides farina* & *Dermatophagoides pteronyssinus*) allergen extract
- **ORALAIR[®]** (Sweet Vernal, Orchard, Perennial Rye, Timothy, Kentucky Blue Grass mixed pollen allergen extract)
- **RAGWITEK[™]** (Short Ragweed pollen allergen extract)

Coverage for services, procedures, medical devices and drugs are dependent upon benefit eligibility as outlined in the member's specific benefit plan. This Pharmacy Coverage Guideline must be read in its entirety to determine coverage eligibility, if any.

This Pharmacy Coverage Guideline provides information related to coverage determinations only and does not imply that a service or treatment is clinically appropriate or inappropriate. The provider and the member are responsible for all decisions regarding the appropriateness of care. Providers should provide BCBSAZ complete medical rationale when requesting any exceptions to these guidelines.

The section identified as "Description" defines or describes a service, procedure, medical device or drug and is in no way intended as a statement of medical necessity and/or coverage.

The section identified as "Criteria" defines criteria to determine whether a service, procedure, medical device or drug is considered medically necessary or experimental or investigational.

State or federal mandates, e.g., FEP program, may dictate that any drug, device or biological product approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) may not be considered experimental or investigational and thus the drug, device or biological product may be assessed only on the basis of medical necessity.

Pharmacy Coverage Guidelines are subject to change as new information becomes available.

For purposes of this Pharmacy Coverage Guideline, the terms "experimental" and "investigational" are considered to be interchangeable.

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This Pharmacy Coverage Guideline does not apply to FEP or other states' Blues Plans.

Information about medications that require precertification is available at www.azblue.com/pharmacy.

Some large (100+) benefit plan groups may customize certain benefits, including adding or deleting precertification requirements.

All applicable benefit plan provisions apply, e.g., waiting periods, limitations, exclusions, waivers and benefit maximums.



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Precertification for medication(s) or product(s) indicated in this guideline requires completion of the [request form](#) in its entirety with the chart notes as documentation. **All requested data must be provided.** Once completed the form must be signed by the prescribing provider and faxed back to BCBSAZ Pharmacy Management at (602) 864-3126 or emailed to Pharmacyprecert@azblue.com. **Incomplete forms or forms without the chart notes will be returned.**

Criteria:

- **Criteria for initial therapy:** Grastek, Oralair, Ragwitek, or Odactra is considered *medically necessary* and will be approved when **ALL** of the following criteria are met:
 1. Prescriber is a physician specializing in the patient's diagnosis or is in consultation with an Allergist or Immunologist
 2. Age is **ONE** of the following:
 - a. 5 years of age or older **for Grastek, Oralair, or Ragwitek**
 - b. 18 years of age or older **for Odactra**
 3. A confirmed diagnosis of allergen-induced allergic rhinitis with or without conjunctivitis, established by positive skin test or testing for allergen-specific IgE antibodies
 4. There is a positive allergen specific-skin test **OR** positive allergen specific immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibody for **ONE** of the following:
 - a. Timothy grass pollen or a cross-reactive allergen **for Grastek**
 - b. Mixed grass pollen or cross-reactive allergen **for Oralair**
 - c. Short ragweed pollen antigen or cross-reactive allergen **for Ragwitek**
 - d. *Dermatophagoides farina* or *Dermatophagoides pteronyssinus* house dust mites **for Odactra**
 5. Individual continues to practice allergen avoidance
 6. Individual also has a prescription for epinephrine auto-injection
 7. Treatment is planned to be initiated within **ONE** of the following:
 - a. At least 3 months (12 weeks) prior to season onset and used through the season **for Grastek or Ragwitek**
 - b. At least 4 months (16 weeks) prior to season onset and used through the season **for Oralair**
 8. Individual has failure, contraindication or intolerance to at least **ONE** intranasal corticosteroid (over the counter or prescription only) for allergic rhinitis
 9. Individual has failure, contraindication or intolerance to **ONE** of the following medications for allergic rhinitis (over the counter or prescription only):
 - a. Oral or nasal antihistamine
 - b. Nasal Anticholinergic



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- c. Oral Leukotriene modifier
 - d. Nasal mast cell stabilizer
10. When applicable, for allergic rhinitis with conjunctivitis use of **ONE** ophthalmic anti-allergy medication (over the counter or prescription only)
11. There are **NO** FDA-label contraindications, such as:
- a. Severe, unstable, or uncontrolled asthma
 - b. History of any severe systemic allergic reaction
 - c. History of eosinophilic esophagitis
 - d. Severe local reaction or any severe systemic allergic reaction to other types of immunotherapy (SCIT, SLIT-drops, or other SLIT-tabs)
12. There are no significant interacting drugs
13. Will not be used in combination with other allergen immunotherapy (SCIT, SLIT-drops, or other SLIT-tabs)

Initial approval duration: 12 months

- **Criteria for continuation of coverage (renewal request):** Grastek, Oralair, Ragwitek, or Odactra is considered ***medically necessary*** and will be approved with documentation of **ALL** of the following:
- 1. Individual continues to be seen by a physician specializing in the patient's diagnosis or is in consultation an Allergist or Immunologist
 - 2. Individual's condition has responded while on therapy
 - a. Response is defined as **TWO** of the following:
 - i. Achieved and maintains reduction in frequency and severity of nasal symptoms (runny nose, stuffy nose, sneezing, or itchy nose)
 - ii. When applicable, achieved and maintains reduction in frequency and severity of ocular symptoms (gritty/itchy eyes and watery eyes)
 - iii. A reduction in the use of or number of additional medications to control symptoms
 - iv. A reduction in recurrent asthma exacerbations while on therapy
 - 3. Individual has been adherent with the medication and allergen avoidance
 - 4. Individual has not developed any contraindications or other significant adverse drug effects that may exclude continued use, such as:
 - a. Contraindications as listed in the criteria for initial therapy section
 - b. Significant adverse effect such as:
 - i. Oral inflammation, oral ulcerations, or oral wounds
 - ii. Persistent and escalating adverse reactions in the mouth or throat
 - iii. Eosinophilic esophagitis

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5. There are no significant interacting drugs
6. Will not be used in combination with other allergen immunotherapy (SCIT, SLIT-drops, or other SLIT-tabs)

Renewal duration: 12 months

- Criteria for a request for non-FDA use or indication, treatment with dosing, frequency, or duration outside the FDA-approved dosing, frequency, and duration, refer to one of the following Pharmacy Coverage Guideline:
1. **Off-Label Use of a Non-cancer Medications**
 2. **Off-Label Use of a Cancer Medication for the Treatment of Cancer without a Specific Coverage Guideline**

Description:

Grastek, Oralair, and Ragwitek are allergen extracts used as allergen immunotherapy for the treatment of pollen-induced allergic rhinitis with or without conjunctivitis confirmed by positive skin test or *in vitro* testing for pollen-specific immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies. Grastek is used for allergies to Timothy grass pollen. Oralair is used for five mixed grass pollen (Kentucky bluegrass, Orchard grass, Perennial Ryegrass, Sweet Vernal grass, and Timothy grass). Ragwitek is used for allergies to short ragweed pollen.

Odactra House Dust Mite (*Dermatophagoides farina* & *Dermatophagoides pteronyssinus*) allergen extract is indicated in adults as immunotherapy for house dust mite (HDM)-induced allergic rhinitis, with or without conjunctivitis, confirmed by *in vitro* testing for immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies to *Dermatophagoides farinae* or *Dermatophagoides pteronyssinus* HDMs, or skin testing to licensed HDM allergen extracts. Odactra is not indicated for the immediate relief of allergic symptoms.

HDM allergies are a reaction to tiny bugs found in house dust on bedding, upholstered furniture, and carpeting. Individuals with HDM allergies experience a cough, runny nose, nasal itching, nasal congestion, sneezing, and itchy and watery eyes.

Allergen immunotherapy (AIT) for the treatment of allergic symptoms has traditionally been administered by subcutaneous injection therapy (SCIT) or as an aqueous or liquid extract of allergen, generally administered as drops, and held under the tongue for a specified period of time and then the residual is swallowed (SLIT-drops). A new alternative approach is administration of allergens using a dissolvable sublingual tablet (SLIT-tabs).

Each SLIT-tab has a risk for anaphylaxis, and they are not used in combination with other immunotherapy (other SLIT-tab, SLIT-drops, or SCIT) due to an increased risk for hypersensitivity reactions. Use of SLIT-tab in individuals with severe, unstable, or uncontrolled asthma is contraindicated.

SLIT-tab therapy must be initiated before the start of the expected allergy season. Initial dose of SLIT-tab is given in the office setting, where the individual can be observed for 30 minutes after the first dose. Individuals require a



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prescription of epinephrine for home use for severe allergic reactions if they develop. SLIT tab is not used to control acute symptoms or to provide immediate relief of symptoms. It should be noted that other long-established therapeutic options mentioned above can be given at any time to control acute and chronic symptoms.

Six medication classes are available for use to treat allergic rhinitis: antihistamines (oral and intranasal), corticosteroids (oral and intranasal), leukotriene receptor antagonists (oral), sympathomimetic decongestants (oral and intranasal), chromolyn (intranasal), and the anticholinergic, ipratropium bromide (intranasal). Selection of any particular agent or combination of agents should be based on type of symptoms needed to control and other medical conditions of the individual.

Oral antihistamines may be less effective than other treatments for prominent congestion symptoms. For mild or intermittent symptoms, use of an oral or intranasal antihistamine may be considered first-line treatment. Due to less sedating effects, newer selective oral antihistamines are recommended over older nonselective antihistamines. Rhinorrhea may respond to intranasal ipratropium and rhinitis-only symptoms may be treated with intranasal rather than oral therapy. Intranasal corticosteroids may be effective for more severe or persistent symptoms.

Combination treatment may consist of oral antihistamine with intranasal corticosteroid, intranasal antihistamine and intranasal corticosteroid, and oral or intranasal antihistamine plus sympathomimetic. Combination therapy may be effective for symptoms nonresponsive to single medications.

Oral sympathomimetics may cause insomnia and their use may be limited in patients with certain comorbidities; intranasal sympathomimetics may cause rebound nasal congestion when used beyond 5 days. Oral leukotriene receptor antagonists may reduce asthma exacerbations in patients with comorbid asthma.

Resources:

Grastek product information, revised by ALK-Abello AS 08-2020. Available at DailyMed <http://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov>. Accessed on July 08, 2021.

Odactra product information, revised by ALK-Abello AS 03-2020. Available at DailyMed <http://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov>. Accessed on July 08, 2021.

Oralair product information, revised by Stallergenes SAS 110-2018. Available at DailyMed <http://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov>. Accessed on July 08, 2021.

Ragwitek product information, revised by ALK-Abello AS 04-2021. Available at DailyMed <http://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov>. Accessed on July 08, 2021.

Creticos PS. Sublingual immunotherapy for allergic rhinoconjunctivitis and asthma. In: UpToDate, Corren J, Feldweg AM (Eds), UpToDate, Waltham MA.: UpToDate Inc. Available at <http://uptodate.com>. Accessed on July 08, 2021.



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deShazo RD, Kemp SF. Pharmacotherapy of allergic rhinitis. In: UpToDate, Corren J, Feldweg AM (Eds), UpToDate, Waltham MA.: UpToDate Inc. Available at <http://uptodate.com>. Accessed on July 08, 2021.
