



AETNA BETTER HEALTH®
Coverage Policy/Guideline

Name:	Epogen / Procrit / Retacrit	Page:	1 of 5
Effective Date:	3/23/2026	Last Review Date:	2/11/2026
Applies to:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illinois		

Intent:

The intent of this policy/guideline is to provide information to the prescribing practitioner outlining the coverage criteria for Epogen, Procrit, and Retacrit under the patient’s prescription drug benefit.

Description:

The indications below including FDA-approved indications and compendial uses are considered a covered benefit provided that all the approval criteria are met, and the member has no exclusions to the prescribed therapy.

A. FDA-Approved Indications

1. Epoetin alfa is indicated for the treatment of anemia due to chronic kidney disease (CKD), including patients on dialysis and not on dialysis to decrease the need for red blood cell (RBC) transfusion.
2. Epoetin alfa is indicated for the treatment of anemia due to zidovudine administered at ≤ 4200 mg/week in HIV-infected patients with endogenous serum erythropoietin levels of ≤ 500 mUnits/mL.
3. Epoetin alfa is indicated for the treatment of anemia in patients with non-myeloid malignancies where anemia is due to the effect of concomitant myelosuppressive chemotherapy, and upon initiation, there is a minimum of two additional months of planned chemotherapy.
4. Epoetin alfa is indicated to reduce the need for allogeneic RBC transfusions among patients with perioperative hemoglobin > 10 to ≤ 13 g/dL who are at high risk for perioperative blood loss from elective, noncardiac, nonvascular surgery. Epoetin alfa is not indicated for patients who are willing to donate autologous blood preoperatively.

B. Compendial Uses

1. Symptomatic anemia in patients with myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS)
2. Anemia in patients who will not/cannot receive blood transfusions
3. Myelofibrosis-associated anemia
6. Cancer patients who are undergoing palliative treatment

All other indications are considered experimental/investigational and not medically necessary.

Applicable Drug List:

Preferred Agents:

Epogen
Procrit

Non-Preferred Agent:

Retacrit



AETNA BETTER HEALTH®
Coverage Policy/Guideline

Name: Epogen / Procrit / Retacrit

Page: 2 of 5

Effective Date: 3/23/2026

Last Review Date: 2/11/2026

Applies to: Illinois

Policy/Guideline:

Documentation

Submission of the following information is necessary to initiate the prior authorization review:

Continuation Requests

Chart notes, medical records, or laboratory results of current (within the last 30 days) hemoglobin level less than 12 g/dL (where applicable).

Coverage Criteria:

Note: Requirements regarding pretreatment hemoglobin level exclude values due to a recent transfusion.

All members must be assessed for iron deficiency anemia and have adequate iron stores (defined as a serum transferrin saturation [TSAT] level greater than or equal to 20% within the prior 3 months) or are receiving iron therapy before starting Epogen/Procrit/Retacrit.

Members may not use Epogen/Procrit/Retacrit concomitantly with other erythropoiesis stimulating agents or with hypoxia-inducible factor prolyl hydroxylase inhibitors (HIF-PHIs).

Requests for Retacrit require that the patient is unable to take Epogen and Procrit for the given diagnosis due to a trial and inadequate treatment response, intolerance, or a contraindication. Documentation is required for approval.

- A. Anemia Due to Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)
Authorization of 12 months may be granted for treatment of anemia due to chronic kidney disease in members with pretreatment hemoglobin < 10 g/dL.
- B. Anemia Due to Myelosuppressive Chemotherapy
Authorization of 6 months may be granted for treatment of anemia due to myelosuppressive chemotherapy in members with non-myeloid malignancy and pretreatment hemoglobin < 10 g/dL.
- C. Anemia in Myelodysplastic Syndrome (MDS)
Authorization of 12 months may be granted for treatment of anemia in myelodysplastic syndrome in members with pretreatment hemoglobin <10 g/dL.
- D. Reduction of Allogeneic Red Blood Cell Transfusion in Patients Undergoing Elective, Noncardiac, Nonvascular Surgery
Authorization of 8 weeks may be granted for reduction of allogeneic red blood cell transfusion in members scheduled to have an elective, noncardiac, nonvascular surgery with pretreatment hemoglobin ≤ 13 g/dL.
- E. Anemia Due to Zidovudine in HIV-infected Patients



AETNA BETTER HEALTH®
Coverage Policy/Guideline

Name: Epogen / Procrit / Retacrit

Page: 3 of 5

Effective Date: 3/23/2026

Last Review Date: 2/11/2026

Applies to: Illinois

Authorization of 12 months may be granted for treatment of anemia due to zidovudine in HIV-infected members currently receiving zidovudine with pretreatment hemoglobin < 10 g/dL whose pretreatment serum EPO level is \leq 500 mU/mL.

F. Anemia in patients who will not/cannot receive blood transfusions

Authorization of 6 months may be granted for treatment of anemia in members whose religious beliefs forbid blood transfusions with pretreatment hemoglobin < 10 g/dL.

G. Myelofibrosis-associated Anemia

Authorization of 12 months may be granted for treatment of myelofibrosis-associated anemia in members who meet both of the following criteria:

1. Pretreatment hemoglobin < 10 g/dL
2. Pretreatment serum EPO level < 500 mU/mL

H. Anemia Due to Cancer

Authorization of 6 months may be granted for treatment of anemia due to cancer in members who have cancer and are undergoing palliative treatment.

Continuation of Therapy:

Note: Requirements regarding current hemoglobin level exclude values due to a recent transfusion.

All members must be assessed for iron deficiency anemia and have adequate iron stores (defined as a serum transferrin saturation [TSAT] level greater than or equal to 20% within the prior 3 months) or are receiving iron therapy before continuation of treatment with Epogen/Procrit/Retacrit.

Members may not use Epogen/Procrit/Retacrit concomitantly with other erythropoiesis stimulating agents or with hypoxia-inducible factor prolyl hydroxylase inhibitors (HIF-PHIs).

A. Anemia Due to CKD

Authorization of 12 months may be granted for continued treatment of anemia due to chronic kidney disease in members with current hemoglobin <12 g/dL.

B. Anemia Due to Myelosuppressive Chemotherapy

Authorization of 6 months may be granted for the continued treatment of anemia due to myelosuppressive chemotherapy in members with non-myeloid malignancy and current hemoglobin <12 g/dL.

C. Anemia in Myelodysplastic Syndrome (MDS)

Authorization of 12 months may be granted for continued treatment of anemia in myelodysplastic syndrome in members with current hemoglobin is <12 g/dL

D. Reduction of Allogenic Red Blood Cell Transfusion in Patients Undergoing Elective, Noncardiac, Nonvascular Surgery



AETNA BETTER HEALTH®
Coverage Policy/Guideline

Name:	Epogen / Procrit / Retacrit	Page:	4 of 5
Effective Date:	3/23/2026	Last Review Date:	2/11/2026
Applies to:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illinois		

All members (including new members) requesting authorization for continuation of therapy must meet all initial authorization criteria.

- E. Anemia Due to Zidovudine in HIV-infected Patients
Authorization of 12 months may be granted for continued treatment of anemia due to zidovudine in HIV-infected members receiving zidovudine with current hemoglobin <12 g/dL.
- F. Anemia in patients who will not/cannot receive blood transfusions
Authorization of 6 months may be granted for continued treatment of anemia in members whose religious beliefs forbid blood transfusions with current hemoglobin <12 g/dL.
- G. Myelofibrosis-associated Anemia
Authorization of 12 months may be granted for continued treatment of anemia in myelofibrosis-associated anemia with current hemoglobin less than 12 g/dL.
- H. Anemia Due to Cancer
Authorization of 6 months may be granted for continued treatment of anemia due to cancer in members who have cancer and are undergoing palliative treatment.

Approval Duration and Quantity Restrictions:

Approval:

- Reduction of Allogeneic Red Blood Cell Transfusion in Patients Undergoing Elective, Noncardiac, Nonvascular Surgery: 8 weeks
- Anemia Due to Zidovudine in HIV-infected Patients: 12 months
- Anemia due to chronic kidney disease, anemia in myelodysplastic syndrome, and myelofibrosis-associated anemia: 12 months
- Myelosuppressive chemotherapy, anemia in members who cannot/will not receive blood transfusions, and anemia due to cancer: 6 months

References:

1. Epogen [package insert]. Thousand Oaks, CA: Amgen Inc.; December 2024.
2. Procrit [package insert]. Horsham, PA: Janssen Products, LP; April 2024.
3. Retacrit [package insert]. New York, NY: Pfizer Labs; June 2024.
4. National Comprehensive Cancer Network. The NCCN Drugs & Biologics Compendium. <http://www.nccn.org>. Accessed September 10, 2025.
5. Micromedex Solutions [database online]. Ann Arbor, MI: Truven Health Analytics Inc. Updated periodically. www.micromedexsolutions.com [available with subscription]. Accessed September 10, 2025.
6. AHFS DI (Adult and Pediatric) [database online]. Hudson, OH: Lexi-Comp, Inc.; http://online.lexi.com/lco/action/index/dataset/complete_ashp [available with subscription]. Accessed September 10, 2025.
7. Kidney Disease: Improving Global Outcomes (KDIGO) Anemia Work Group. KDIGO Clinical Practice Guideline for Anemia in Chronic Kidney Disease. *Kidney Int.* 2012;Suppl 2:279-335.



AETNA BETTER HEALTH®
Coverage Policy/Guideline

Name:	Epogen / Procrit / Retacrit	Page:	5 of 5
Effective Date:	3/23/2026	Last Review Date:	2/11/2026
Applies to:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illinois		

8. Bohlius J, Bohlke K, Castelli R, et al. Management of cancer-associated anemia with erythropoiesis-stimulating agents: ASCO/ASH clinical practice guideline update J Clin Oncol. 2019 May 20;37(15):1336-1351.
9. National Comprehensive Cancer Network. NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology: Myeloproliferative Neoplasms. Version 2.2025. http://www.nccn.org/professionals/physician_gls/pdf/mpn.pdf. Accessed September 07, 2025.
10. Cervantes F, Alvarez-Larran A, Hernandez-Boluda JC, et al. Erythropoietin treatment of the anemia of myelofibrosis with myeloid metaplasia: results in 20 patients and review of the literature. Br J Haematol. 2004;127(4):399-403.
11. Henry DH, Beall GN, Benson CA, Carey J, Cone LA, Eron LJ, et al. Recombinant Human Erythropoietin in the Treatment of Anemia Associated with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Infection and Zidovudine Therapy: Overview of Four Clinical Trials. Ann Intern Med.; 117:739-748. doi: 10.7326/0003-4819-117-9-739
12. Gabilove j, Paquette R, Lyons R, Mushtaq C, Sekeres M, Tomita D, Dreiling L. Phase 2, single-arm trial to evaluate the effectiveness of darbepoetin alfa for correcting anemia in patients with myelodysplastic syndromes. Br J Haematol. 2008 Aug; 142(3): 379-393.
13. National Comprehensive Cancer Network. NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology: Myelodysplastic Syndromes. Version 2.2025.