BlueCross BlueShield
Federal Employee Program

CHOLESTYRAMINE POWDER

RATIONALE FOR INCLUSION IN PA PROGRAM

Background

Cholestyramine is a binding agent that forms a complex in the intestine with bile acids and facilitates their excretion. This helps decrease the levels of cholesterol as it is a precursor of bile acid. Cholesterol is used to help synthesize new bile acid to make up for the losses resulting in decreased LDL levels. In patients with partial biliary obstruction, excess bile acids are deposited in the skin resulting in pruritus. By decreasing the levels of bile acids, the amount and rate of dermal deposition is decreased (1).

Cholestyramine is commercially available in the following dosage forms: pre-packaged powder and as a loose powder for mixing.

Regulatory Status

FDA-approved indications: Cholestyramine is indicated: (1-2)

- As adjunctive therapy to diet for primary hypercholesterolemia.
- In pruritus associated with elevated levels of bile acids.

The safety and efficacy of cholestyramine have not been established in pregnant women, but cholestyramine has been used in pediatric patients below 2 years of age (1).

Summary

Bile acid sequestrants provide LDL lowering properties by binding to bile acids in the intestine and facilitating their removal. Cholestyramine is FDA approved for the adjunct treatment of hypercholesterolemia as well as pruritic manifestations of partial biliary obstruction. The safety and efficacy have not been established in pregnant women. Cholestyramine is commercially available in the following dosage forms: pre-packaged powder and loose powder.

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

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References

1. Questran [package insert]. Chestnut Ridge, NY: Par Pharmaceutical; November 2019.
2. Cholestyramine In: UpToDate, Waltham, MA, 2022. Accessed on February 2, 2023.