

**Clinical Policy: Buprenorphine Implant/Injection (Probuphine, Sublocade)**

Reference Number: CP.PHAR.289

Effective Date: 12.01.16

Last Review Date: 02.22

Line of Business: Commercial, HIM, Medicaid

[Coding Implications](#)[Revision Log](#)

See [Important Reminder](#) at the end of this policy for important regulatory and legal information.

**Description**

Buprenorphine (Probuphine<sup>®</sup>, Sublocade<sup>®</sup>) is a partial opioid agonist.

**FDA Approved Indication(s)**

Probuphine is indicated for the maintenance treatment of opioid dependence in patients who have achieved and sustained prolonged clinical stability on low-to-moderate doses of a transmucosal buprenorphine-containing product (i.e., doses of no more than 8 mg per day of Subutex or Suboxone sublingual tablet or generic equivalent).

Sublocade is indicated for the treatment of moderate to severe opioid use disorder in patients who have initiated treatment with a buprenorphine-containing product, followed by dose adjustment for a minimum of 7 days.

Both should be used as part of a complete treatment program that includes counseling and psychosocial support.

Limitation(s) of use: Probuphine is not appropriate for new entrants to treatment and patients who have not achieved and sustained prolonged clinical stability, while being maintained on buprenorphine 8 mg per day or less of a Subutex or Suboxone sublingual tablet or generic equivalent.

**Policy/Criteria**

*Provider must submit documentation (such as office chart notes, lab results or other clinical information) supporting that member has met all approval criteria.*

It is the policy of health plans affiliated with Centene Corporation<sup>®</sup> that Probuphine and Sublocade are **medically necessary** when the following criteria are met:

**I. Initial Approval Criteria****A. Probuphine Implant (must meet all):**

1. Diagnosis of opioid dependence;
2. Age  $\geq$  16 years;
3. Currently on a maintenance dose of  $\leq$  8 mg/day of oral buprenorphine or buprenorphine-naloxone sublingual tablet or film (members should not be tapered down to a lower dose for the sole purpose of transitioning to Probuphine) for 3 months or longer without any need for supplemental dosing or adjustments;

4. Medical justification supports inability to continue to use oral (e.g., sublingual, buccal) formulations of buprenorphine as evidenced by one of the following:
  - a. Documentation of non-compliance to oral formulations of buprenorphine;
  - b. Treatment failure with oral formulations of buprenorphine;
  - c. History of diversion with buprenorphine medication-assisted treatment (MAT) products;
  - d. Contraindication(s) or clinically significant adverse effects to the excipients of oral formulations of buprenorphine;
5. Dose does not exceed 4 implants per 6 months.

**Approval duration:**

**Medicaid/Commercial** – 6 months (*12 months for New Hampshire*)

**HIM** – 12 months

**B. Sublocade Injection** (must meet all):

1. Diagnosis of opioid dependence;
2. Age  $\geq$  18 years;
3. Currently on a dose of 8 to 24 mg/day of a buprenorphine or buprenorphine-naloxone sublingual tablet or film for 7 days or longer;
4. Medical justification supports inability to continue to use oral (e.g., sublingual, buccal) formulations of buprenorphine as evidenced by one of the following:
  - a. Documentation of non-compliance to oral formulations of buprenorphine;
  - b. Treatment failure with oral formulations of buprenorphine;
  - c. History of diversion with buprenorphine MAT products;
  - d. Contraindication(s) or clinically significant adverse effects to the excipients of oral formulations of buprenorphine;
5. Dose does not exceed 300 mg per month.

**Approval duration:**

**Medicaid/Commercial** – 6 months (*12 months for New Hampshire*)

**HIM** – 12 months

**C. Other diagnoses/indications**

1. Refer to the off-label use policy for the relevant line of business if diagnosis is NOT specifically listed under section III (Diagnoses/Indications for which coverage is NOT authorized): CP.CPA.09 for commercial, HIM.PA.154 for health insurance marketplace, and CP.PMN.53 for Medicaid.

**II. Continued Therapy**

**A. Probuphine Implant** (must meet all):

1. Currently receiving medication via Centene benefit or member has previously met initial approval criteria;
2. Member is responding positively to therapy;
3. One of the following conditions is met (a or b):
  - a. Member has NOT received an opioid analgesic since last approval;
  - b. Prescriber submits documentation acknowledging that the use of opioid during the last approval period was due to a diagnosis of acute pain;

4. Member has not had prior implants inserted in the contralateral arm (i.e., member has not previously received 2 sets of implants [one set is defined as four implants per arm]);
5. Dose does not exceed 4 implants per 6 months.

**Approval duration:**

**Medicaid/Commercial** – 6 months (a second [and last] set of four implants) *(12 months for New Hampshire)*

**HIM** – 12 months

**B. Sublocade Injection** (must meet all):

1. Currently receiving medication via Centene benefit or member has previously met initial approval criteria;
2. Member is responding positively to therapy;
3. One of the following conditions is met (a or b):
  - a. Member has NOT received an opioid analgesic since last approval;
  - b. Prescriber submits documentation acknowledging that the use of opioid during the last approval period was due to a diagnosis of acute pain;
4. If request is for a dose increase, new dose does not exceed 300 mg per month.

**Approval duration:**

**Medicaid/Commercial** – 6 months (a second [and last] set of four implants) *(12 months for New Hampshire)*

**HIM** – 12 months

**C. Other diagnoses/indications** (must meet 1 or 2):

1. Currently receiving medication via Centene benefit and documentation supports positive response to therapy.  
**Approval duration: Duration of request or 6 months (whichever is less);** or
2. Refer to the off-label use policy for the relevant line of business if diagnosis is NOT specifically listed under section III (Diagnoses/Indications for which coverage is NOT authorized): CP.CPA.09 for commercial, HIM.PA.154 for health insurance marketplace, and CP.PMN.53 for Medicaid.

**III. Diagnoses/Indications for which coverage is NOT authorized:**

- A. Non-FDA approved indications, which are not addressed in this policy, unless there is sufficient documentation of efficacy and safety according to the off label use policies – CP.CPA.09 for commercial, HIM.PA.154 for health insurance marketplace, and CP.PMN.53 for Medicaid, or evidence of coverage documents.

**IV. Appendices/General Information**

*Appendix A: Abbreviation/Acronym Key*

EVA: ethylene vinyl acetate

FDA: Food and Drug Administration

MAT: medication-assisted treatment

REMS: Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy

*Appendix B: Therapeutic Alternatives*

*This table provides a listing of preferred alternative therapy recommended in the approval criteria. The drugs listed here may not be a formulary agent for all relevant lines of business and may require prior authorization.*

Drug Name	Dosing Regimen	Dose Limit/ Maximum Dose
Buprenorphine (Subutex) oral tablets	<u>Maintenance</u> : Target dose: 16 mg PO once daily; dosage should be adjusted in increments or decrements of 2 mg or 4 mg to a level that maintains treatment and suppresses opioid withdrawal symptoms; usual range: 4 mg to 24 mg per day	24 mg per day
buprenorphine/naloxone (Suboxone) sublingual (SL) or buccal dissolving film, SL tablet	<u>Maintenance</u> : Target dose: buprenorphine 16 mg/naloxone 4 mg PO once daily; dosage should be adjusted in increments or decrements of 2 mg/ 0.5 mg or 4 mg/1 mg to a level that maintains treatment and suppresses opioid withdrawal symptoms; usual range: 4 mg/1 mg to 24 mg/6 mg per day	24 mg/6 mg per day
Bunavail <sup>®</sup> (buprenorphine/naloxone) buccal film	<u>Maintenance</u> : Target dose: buprenorphine 8.4 mg/naloxone 1.4 mg PO once daily; dosage should be adjusted in increments or decrements of 2.1 mg/ 0.3 mg to a level that maintains treatment and suppresses opioid withdrawal symptoms; usual range: 2.1 mg/0.3 mg to 12.6 mg/2.1 mg per day	12.6 mg/2.1 mg per day
Zubsolv <sup>®</sup> (buprenorphine/naloxone) SL tablet	<u>Maintenance</u> : Target dose: buprenorphine 11.4 mg/naloxone 2.9 mg PO once daily; dosage should be adjusted in increments or decrements of 2.9 mg/ 0.71 mg to a level that maintains treatment and suppresses opioid withdrawal symptoms; usual range: 2.9 mg/0.71 mg to 17.2 mg/4.2 mg per day	17.2 mg/4.2 mg per day

*Therapeutic alternatives are listed as Brand name<sup>®</sup> (generic) when the drug is available by brand name only and generic (Brand name<sup>®</sup>) when the drug is available by both brand and generic.*

*Appendix C: Contraindications/Boxed Warnings*

- Contraindication(s):
  - Probuphine: hypersensitivity to buprenorphine or any other ingredients in Probuphine (e.g., EVA)
  - Sublocade: hypersensitivity to buprenorphine or any other ingredients in Sublocade
- Boxed warning(s):
  - Probuphine: implant migration, protrusion, expulsion, and nerve damage associated with insertion and removal; available only through a restricted program called the Probuphine REMS Program

- Sublocade: risk of serious harm or death with intravenous administration; available only through a restricted program called the Sublocade REMS Program

*Appendix D: General Information*

- There is no clinical experience with insertion of Probuphine beyond a single insertion in each arm. It is important to avoid previously-implanted sites because the effect of scarring and fibrosis in previously-used insertion sites on either the effectiveness of Probuphine or the safety of insertion have not been evaluated. Following 1 insertion in each arm, most patients should be transitioned back to a transmucosal buprenorphine-containing product for continued treatment.

*Appendix E: Brand/Generic Transmucosal Formulations Equivalent to Subutex or Suboxone Sublingual Tablets Containing  $\leq 8$  mg of Buprenorphine*

Drug	Transmucosal* Formulation	Brand/ Generic <sup>†</sup>	Brand/ Generic Strength	Subutex/Suboxone <sup>‡</sup> Sublingual Tablet Strength
			<i>Buprenorphine/Naloxone<sup>§</sup> Equivalency</i>	
Buprenorphine HCL	Tablet, sublingual	Generic	2 mg 8 mg	2 mg (Subutex) 8 mg (Subutex)
Buprenorphine HCL/naloxone HCL	Tablet, sublingual	Generic	2 mg/0.5 mg 8 mg/2 mg	2 mg/0.5 mg (Suboxone) 8 mg/2 mg (Suboxone)
		Zubsolv	1.4 mg/0.36 mg 2.9 mg/0.71 mg 5.7 mg/1.4 mg	2 mg/0.5mg (Suboxone) 4 mg/1 mg (Suboxone) 8 mg/2 mg (Suboxone)
		Bunavail	2.1 mg/0.3 mg 4.2 mg/0.7 mg	4 mg/1 mg (Suboxone) 8 mg/2 mg (Suboxone)
	Film, buccal	Bunavail	2.1 mg/0.3 mg 4.2 mg/0.7 mg	4 mg/1 mg (Suboxone) 8 mg/2 mg (Suboxone)
	Film, sublingual or buccal	Suboxone	2 mg/0.5 mg 4 mg/1 mg 8 mg/2 mg	2 mg/0.5 mg (Suboxone) 4 mg/1 mg (Suboxone) 8 mg/2 mg (Suboxone)

\*Transmucosal formulations include buprenorphine and buprenorphine/naloxone sublingual tablets and buccal/sublingual films.

<sup>†</sup>For a more comprehensive listing of brand/generic sublingual/buccal transmucosal formulations see the U.S. Food & Drug Administration Orange Book: Approved drug products with therapeutic equivalence evaluations at [http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/ob/search\\_product.cfm](http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/ob/search_product.cfm).

<sup>‡</sup>Subutex (buprenorphine) and Suboxone (buprenorphine/naloxone) sublingual tablets, while used as buprenorphine equivalency references, are no longer available in the U.S.

<sup>§</sup>Naloxone (an opioid antagonist) is minimally absorbed in sublingual/buccal transmucosal formulations and rather is added to discourage diversion or misuse.

**V. Dosage and Administration**

Drug Name	Dosing Regimen	Maximum Dose
Buprenorphine (Probuphine)	Each dose consists of 4 implants inserted subdermally in the inner side of the upper arm. The implants are intended to be in place for 6 months. New implants may be inserted subdermally in an area of the inner side of either upper arm that has not been previously used at the time of removal, if continued treatment is desired. If new implants are not inserted on the same day as the removal of old implants, maintain patients on their previous dose of transmucosal buprenorphine prior to insert of the implant. Following 1 insertion in each arm, most patients should be transitioned back to a transmucosal buprenorphine-containing product for continued treatment.	4 implants/6 months
Buprenorphine (Sublocade)	Two monthly initial doses of 300 mg subcutaneously followed by 100 mg monthly maintenance doses	300 mg per month

**VI. Product Availability**

Drug Name	Availability
Buprenorphine (Probuphine)	Ethylene vinyl acetate (EVA) implant, 26 mm in length and 2.5 mm in diameter, containing 74.2 mg of buprenorphine (equivalent to 80 mg of buprenorphine hydrochloride)
Buprenorphine (Sublocade)	Prefilled syringe: 100 mg/0.5 mL and 300 mg/1.5 mL

**VII. References**

1. Probuphine Prescribing Information. Princeton, NJ: Braeburn Pharmaceuticals, Inc.; March 2021. Available at: <https://probuphine.com/>. Accessed November 22, 2021.
2. Sublocade Prescribing Information. North Chesterfield, VA: Indivior Inc.; June 2021. Available at <https://www.sublocade.com/>. Accessed November 22, 2021.
3. Clinical Pharmacology [database online]. Tampa, FL: Gold Standard, Inc.; 2018. Available at: <http://www.clinicalpharmacology-ip.com/>. Accessed November 22, 2021.
4. Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. Clinical Guidelines for the Use of Buprenorphine in the Treatment of Opioid Addiction. Rockville (MD): Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (US); 2004. (Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series, No. 40.) Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK64245/>. Accessed December 2, 2020.
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6. Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. Medication-Assisted Treatment for Opioid Addiction in Opioid Treatment Programs. Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series 43. DHHS Publication No. (SMA) 05-4048. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2005. Available at:  
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<https://www.asam.org/docs/default-source/practice-support/guidelines-and-consensus-docs/asam-national-practice-guideline-supplement.pdf>. Accessed December 3, 2020.

### Coding Implications

Codes referenced in this clinical policy are for informational purposes only. Inclusion or exclusion of any codes does not guarantee coverage. Providers should reference the most up-to-date sources of professional coding guidance prior to the submission of claims for reimbursement of covered services.

HCPSC Codes	Description
J0570	Buprenorphine implant, 74.2 mg
Q9991	Injection, buprenorphine extended-release (Sublocade), less than or equal to 100 mg
Q9992	Injection, buprenorphine extended-release (Sublocade), greater than 100 mg

Reviews, Revisions, and Approvals	Date	P&T Approval Date
1Q18 annual review: Policies combined for commercial and Medicaid lines of business; Commercial: removed requirement that member is not using concurrent opioid medications (including tramadol) from initial approval criteria; re-auth: added requirements related to absence/presence of opioid use since last approval; Medicaid: added age restriction as safety and effectiveness of Probuphine have not been established in children or adolescents < 16 years of age; removed “No evidence or reports of illicit opioid use (confirmed with at least one random urine drug screen within the last 3 months), significant withdrawal symptoms, significant desire/need to use illicit opioids, hospitalizations, emergency room visits or crisis interventions for addiction or mental health issues, and non-adherence to clinic visits or drug abuse counseling as recommended”; removed requirement for participation in drug abuse counseling to shift the responsibility of appropriate monitoring and use to the prescriber; added requirement for	11.09.17	02.18



Reviews, Revisions, and Approvals	Date	P&T Approval Date
medical justification to support why oral (e.g., sublingual, buccal) formulations of buprenorphine cannot be continued; re-auth: removed that if a supplemental buprenorphine containing product was prescribed, it was prescribed only intermittently rather than on an ongoing basis; References reviewed and updated.		
Added criteria for Sublocade to policy.	01.09.18	05.18
1Q 2019 annual review: updated requirement related to medical justification; references reviewed and updated.	10.03.18	02.19
1Q 2020 annual review: no significant changes; added HIM line of business; references reviewed and updated.	11.26.19	02.20
1Q 2021 annual review: no significant changes; references to HIM.PHAR.21 revised to HIM.PA.154; added coding implications; references reviewed and updated.	12.02.20	02.21
Added separate approval duration for initial and continued approval of 12 months for HIM lines of business to meet regulatory requirements; added that approval durations should be 12 months for NH for other lines of business.	11.02.21	
1Q 2022 annual review: no significant changes; references reviewed and updated.	11.22.21	02.22

### **Important Reminder**

This clinical policy has been developed by appropriately experienced and licensed health care professionals based on a review and consideration of currently available generally accepted standards of medical practice; peer-reviewed medical literature; government agency/program approval status; evidence-based guidelines and positions of leading national health professional organizations; views of physicians practicing in relevant clinical areas affected by this clinical policy; and other available clinical information. The Health Plan makes no representations and accepts no liability with respect to the content of any external information used or relied upon in developing this clinical policy. This clinical policy is consistent with standards of medical practice current at the time that this clinical policy was approved. “Health Plan” means a health plan that has adopted this clinical policy and that is operated or administered, in whole or in part, by Centene Management Company, LLC, or any of such health plan’s affiliates, as applicable.

The purpose of this clinical policy is to provide a guide to medical necessity, which is a component of the guidelines used to assist in making coverage decisions and administering benefits. It does not constitute a contract or guarantee regarding payment or results. Coverage decisions and the administration of benefits are subject to all terms, conditions, exclusions and limitations of the coverage documents (e.g., evidence of coverage, certificate of coverage, policy, contract of insurance, etc.), as well as to state and federal requirements and applicable Health Plan-level administrative policies and procedures.

This clinical policy is effective as of the date determined by the Health Plan. The date of posting may not be the effective date of this clinical policy. This clinical policy may be subject to



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This clinical policy does not constitute medical advice, medical treatment or medical care. It is not intended to dictate to providers how to practice medicine. Providers are expected to exercise professional medical judgment in providing the most appropriate care, and are solely responsible for the medical advice and treatment of members. This clinical policy is not intended to recommend treatment for members. Members should consult with their treating physician in connection with diagnosis and treatment decisions.

Providers referred to in this clinical policy are independent contractors who exercise independent judgment and over whom the Health Plan has no control or right of control. Providers are not agents or employees of the Health Plan.

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**Note:**

**For Medicaid members,** when state Medicaid coverage provisions conflict with the coverage provisions in this clinical policy, state Medicaid coverage provisions take precedence. Please refer to the state Medicaid manual for any coverage provisions pertaining to this clinical policy.

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