# Clinical Policy: Anifrolumab-fnia (Saphnelo)

Reference Number: CP.PHAR.551
Effective Date: 12.01.21
Last Review Date: 11.26
Line of Business: Commercial, HIM/ICHRA, Medicaid

Coding Implications
Revision Log

**See Important Reminder at the end of this policy for important regulatory and legal information.**

## Description

Anifrolumab-fnia (Saphnelo®) is a type I interferon (IFN) receptor antagonist.

## FDA Approved Indication(s)

Saphnelo is indicated for the treatment of adult patients with moderate to severe systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) who are receiving standard therapy.

Limitation(s) of use: The efficacy of Saphnelo has not been evaluated in patients with severe active lupus nephritis or severe active central nervous system lupus. Use of Saphnelo is not recommended in these situations.

## 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® that Saphnelo is **medically necessary** when the following criteria are met:

**I. Initial Approval Criteria**

**A. Systemic Lupus Erythematosus** (must meet all)**:**

1. Diagnosis of SLE;
2. Prescribed by or in consultation with a rheumatologist;
3. Age ≥ 18 years;
4. Documentation confirms that member is positive for an SLE autoantibody (e.g., anti-nuclear antibody [ANA], anti-double-stranded DNA [anti-dsDNA], anti-Smith [anti-Sm], anti-ribonucleoprotein [anti-RNP], anti-Ro/SSA, anti-La/SSB, antiphospholipid antibody);
5. Prescribed in combination with standard therapy for SLE that includes one or more of the following agents, unless all agents are contraindicated: glucocorticoids (e.g., prednisone), antimalarial (e.g., hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine), non-biologic immunosuppressants (e.g., azathioprine, methotrexate, mycophenolate);
6. Member is not receiving Saphnelo in combination with Lupkynis® or a biologic agent (e.g., Benlysta®);
7. Member does not have severe active central nervous system lupus or severe active lupus nephritis;
8. Dose does not exceed one of the following (a or b):
   a. IV: 300 mg (1 vial) every 4 weeks;
   b. SC: 120 mg per week, and one of the following (i or ii):

i. 1 syringe per week;
ii. 1 autoinjector per week.

**Approval duration:**
**Medicaid/HIM/ICHRA –** 12 months
**Commercial –** 6 months or to member's renewal date, whichever is longer

**B. Other diagnoses/indications** (must meet 1 or 2)**:**
1. If this drug has recently (within the last 6 months) undergone a label change (e.g., newly approved indication, age expansion, new dosing regimen) that is not yet reflected in this policy, refer to one of the following policies (a or b):
   a. For drugs on the formulary (commercial, health insurance marketplace/ICHRA) or PDL (Medicaid), the no coverage criteria policy for the relevant line of business: CP.CPA.190 for commercial, HIM.PA.33 for health insurance marketplace/ICHRA, and CP.PMN.255 for Medicaid; or
   b. For drugs NOT on the formulary (commercial, health insurance marketplace/ICHRA) or PDL (Medicaid), the non-formulary policy for the relevant line of business: CP.CPA.190 for commercial, HIM.PA.103 for health insurance marketplace/ICHRA, and CP.PMN.16 for Medicaid; or
2. If the requested use (e.g., diagnosis, age, dosing regimen) is NOT specifically listed under section III (Diagnoses/Indications for which coverage is NOT authorized) AND criterion 1 above does not apply, refer to the off-label use policy for the relevant line of business: CP.CPA.09 for commercial, HIM.PA.154 for health insurance marketplace/ICHRA, and CP.PMN.53 for Medicaid.

## II. Continued Therapy

**A. Systemic Lupus Erythematosus** (must meet all)**:**
1. Member meets one of the following (a or b):
   a. Currently receiving medication via Centene benefit or member has previously met initial approval criteria;
   b. Member is currently receiving medication and is enrolled in a state and product with continuity of care regulations (*refer to state specific addendums for CC.PHARM.03A and CC.PHARM.03B);*
2. Member is responding positively to therapy;
3. Prescribed in combination with standard therapy for SLE that includes one or more of the following agents, unless all agents are contraindicated: glucocorticoids (e.g., prednisone), antimalarial (e.g., hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine), non-biologic immunosuppressants (e.g., azathioprine, methotrexate, mycophenolate);
4. Member is not receiving Saphnelo in combination with Lupkynis or a biologic agent (e.g., Benlysta);
5. Member does not have severe active central nervous system lupus or severe active lupus nephritis;
6. If request is for a dose increase, new dose does not exceed one of the following (a or b):
   a. IV: 300 mg (1 vial) every 4 weeks;
   b. SC: 120 mg per week, and one of the following (i or ii):
      i. 1 syringe per week;

ii. 1 autoinjector per week.

**Approval duration:**
**Medicaid/HIM/ICHRA –** 12 months
**Commercial –** 6 months or to member's renewal date, whichever is longer

**B. Other diagnoses/indications** (must meet 1 or 2)**:**
1. If this drug has recently (within the last 6 months) undergone a label change (e.g., newly approved indication, age expansion, new dosing regimen) that is not yet reflected in this policy, refer to one of the following policies (a or b):
   a. For drugs on the formulary (commercial, health insurance marketplace/ICHRA) or PDL (Medicaid), the no coverage criteria policy for the relevant line of business: CP.CPA.190 for commercial, HIM.PA.33 for health insurance marketplace/ICHRA, and CP.PMN.255 for Medicaid; or
   b. For drugs NOT on the formulary (commercial, health insurance marketplace/ICHRA) or PDL (Medicaid), the non-formulary policy for the relevant line of business: CP.CPA.190 for commercial, HIM.PA.103 for health insurance marketplace/ICHRA, and CP.PMN.16 for Medicaid; or
2. If the requested use (e.g., diagnosis, age, dosing regimen) is NOT specifically listed under section III (Diagnoses/Indications for which coverage is NOT authorized) AND criterion 1 above does not apply, refer to the off-label use policy for the relevant line of business: CP.CPA.09 for commercial, HIM.PA.154 for health insurance marketplace/ICHRA, 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/ICHRA, and CP.PMN.53 for Medicaid, or evidence of coverage documents;

**B.** Autoantibody negative SLE.

## IV. Appendices/General Information

*Appendix A: Abbreviation/Acronym Key*

ANA: anti-nuclear antibody
Anti-dsDNA: anti-double-stranded DNA
Anti-Sm: anti-Smith
DNA: deoxyribonucleic acid
FDA: Food and Drug Administration
LN: lupus nephritis
RNP: ribonucleoprotein
SLE: systemic lupus erythematosus

*Appendix B: Therapeutic Alternatives*

Not applicable

*Appendix C: Contraindications/Boxed Warnings*

- Contraindication(s): previous anaphylaxis with anifrolumab-fnia
- Boxed warning(s): none reported

*Appendix D: Autoantibody Positive Versus Negative SLE*
The pivotal clinical trials for Saphnelo enrolled patients with at least one of the following:

- Positive antinuclear antibody test at screening by immunofluorescent assay (IFA) at the central laboratory with titer ≥ 1:80;
- Anti-dsDNA antibodies at screening elevated to above normal (including indeterminate), as per the central laboratory;
- Anti-Smith antibody at screening elevated to above normal as per the central laboratory

## V. Dosage and Administration

| Indication | Dosing Regimen | Maximum Dose |
|---|---|---|
| SLE | 300 mg IV every 4 weeks or 120 mg SC every week | See dosing regimen |

## VI. Product Availability

- Single-dose vial for IV infusion: 300 mg/2 mL
- Single-dose prefilled syringe for SC injection: 120 mg/0.8 mL
- Single-dose autoinjector for SC injection (Saphnelo Pen): 120 mg/0.8 mL

## VII. References

1. Saphnelo Prescribing Information. Wilmington, DE: AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals LP; April 2026. Available at: www.saphnelo.com. Accessed July 8, 2026.
2. Morand EF, Furie R, Tanaka Y, et al. Trial of Anifrolumab in active systemic lupus erythematosus. N Engl J Med 2020;382:211-21.
3. Furie R, Khamashta M, Merrill JT, et al. Anifrolumab, an anti–interferon-a receptor monoclonal antibody, in moderate-to-severe systemic lupus erythematosus. Arthritis & Rheumatology 2017; 69(2): 376-386.
4. Sammaritano LR, Askanase A, Bermas BL, et al. 2025 American College of Rheumatology (ACR) guideline for the treatment of systemic lupus erythematosus. Arthritis Care Res (Hoboken). 2026;78(7):815-839.
5. Fanouriakis A, Kostopoulou M, Alunno A, et al. 2019 update of the EULAR recommendations for the management of systemic lupus erythematosus. *Ann Rheum Dis.* 2019;0:1–10. doi:10.1136/annrheumdis-2019-215089.
6. Fanouriakis A, Kostopoulou M, Andersen J, et al. EULAR recommendations for the management of systemic lupus erythematosus: 2023 update. Ann Rheum Dis. 2024;83(1):15-29.
7. Petri M, Orbai AM, Alarcón GS, et al. Derivation and validation of the Systemic Lupus International Collaborating Clinics classification criteria for systemic lupus erythematosus. *Arthritis Rheum.* 2012; 64:2677.

## 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.

| HCPCS Codes | Description |
|---|---|
| J0491 | Injection, anifrolumab-fnia, 1 mg |

| HCPCS Codes | Description |
|---|---|
| J3590 | Unclassified biologics |
| C9399 | Unclassified drugs or biologicals |

| Reviews, Revisions, and Approvals | Date | P&T Approval Date |
|---|---|---|
| 4Q 2022 annual review: no significant changes; references reviewed and updated. Template changes applied to other diagnoses/indications and continued therapy section. | 08.11.22 | 11.22 |
| 4Q 2023 annual review: added exclusion for concurrent biologic per Warning in the Prescribing Information; references reviewed and updated. | 07.10.23 | 11.23 |
| 4Q 2024 annual review: added exclusions for concurrent treatment with Lupkynis and diagnoses of severe active central nervous system lupus or severe active lupus nephritis; references reviewed and updated. | 07.19.24 | 11.24 |
| 4Q 2025 annual review: revised Medicaid and HIM initial approval durations to 12 months; added coding implications section; references reviewed and updated. | 07.15.25 | 11.25 |
| RT4: added new subcutaneous formulations of prefilled syringe and autoinjector. | 04.30.26 | |
| 4Q 2026 annual review: no significant changes; added ICHRA line of business; added HCPCS codes; references reviewed and updated. | 07.08.26 | 11.26 |

**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 applicable legal and regulatory requirements relating to provider notification. If there is a discrepancy between the effective date of this clinical policy and any applicable legal or regulatory requirement, the requirements of law and regulation shall govern. The Health Plan retains the right to change, amend or withdraw this clinical policy, and additional clinical policies may be developed and adopted as needed, at any time.

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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