

Medical policy documentation requirement updates

Frequently asked questions

Overview

To help physicians and nurses conduct clinical coverage reviews and better evaluate medical necessity based on medical policy and/or Milliman Care Guidelines® (MCG), we've refined medical policy documentation requirements and enhanced clinical coverage criteria for various procedures.

The policy updates are effective for dates of service as follows:

States	Effective dates
Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.	Oct. 1, 2020
Tennessee	Nov. 1, 2020
Nebraska	Jan. 1, 2021

Key points

- This applies to most UnitedHealthcare Community plans.
- Check individual policies for specific requirements.

Frequently asked questions

The updates include the following:

- Refinement of current medical policy and/or MCG definitions of certain terms (e.g., "severe") to help ensure the policy is applied appropriately and consistently.
- Enhancement of medical policies and/or MCG to include specific measurements and imaging, when appropriate.

We'll incorporate these updates during prior authorization and post-service reviews.

Why is UnitedHealthcare making this change?

We are enhancing our medical policy documentation requirements and clinical coverage criteria for various procedures to better accomplish the triple aim of better care, better health and lower costs for our members.

Which UnitedHealthcare plans are affected by these changes?

These changes affect the following UnitedHealthcare Community plans: Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.

Which UnitedHealthcare policies may require image sharing?

As of the dates listed in the “Overview” section above, the following policies may require images to determine if medical criteria are met:

- Surgical Treatment for Spine Pain*
- Knee Replacement Surgery (Arthroplasty), Total and Partial*
- Total Artificial Disc Replacement for the Spine*
- Hip Resurfacing and Replacement Surgery (Arthroplasty)*
- Functional Endoscopic Sinus Surgery (FESS)
- Balloon Sinus Ostial Dilation
- Surgical and Ablative Procedures for Venous Insufficiency and Varicose Veins
- Shoulder Replacement Surgery (Arthroplasty)*
- Skin and Soft Tissue Substitutes

Image protocol varies by policy and is not limited to the policies listed. Please refer to applicable medical policies to determine if an unlisted policy requires image sharing. We may make technology enhancements in the future that allow for direct image sharing. When this happens, we'll inform providers.

**We'll review prior authorization requests for total joint replacements and spine procedures without a shared image. However, in select cases, we may require an image if we need it to determine if clinical criteria are met.*

Where can I find these policies?

You can find the policies at [UHCprovider.com](https://www.uhcprovider.com) > Policies and Protocols > Community Plan Policies > [Medical & Drug Policies and Coverage Determination Guidelines for Community Plan](#).

How will UnitedHealthcare use the images in the prior authorization process?

We'll review images as part of our prior authorization process, as they represent an important component of the clinical record.

Sharing images

Which images should I share?

The images shared should be limited to the specific diagnostic image(s) showing the abnormality for which surgery is being requested. The images required vary by policy and may be photographs, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans, computed tomography (CT) scans, X-rays or bone scans. You may need to consult with the requesting surgeon to select the optimal images.

Suggestions

For MRI or CT scans, axial images of the abnormal level(s) and a single midline sagittal reconstruction of the area of interest may be sufficient to demonstrate the abnormality that requires intervention.

For X-rays, standard anterior/posterior (AP) and lateral views of the area of interest will likely be sufficient. If it's a complex case or surgery involving multiple sites, you may need to share more images.

Examples of Images

Knee Surgery



Hip Surgery



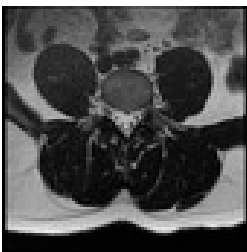
Spine Surgery, Lateral Spine



Spine Surgery, AP Spine



Spine Surgery, Spine MRI Axial



Spine Surgery, Spine MRI Sagittal



Example images sourced from radiopedia.org.

How should I label the images?

You must label diagnostic images with the date it was taken and identifying information, such as the member's name and ID number on the image(s). This information is often already embedded in the image itself.

What types of file formats can I upload in the Prior Authorization tool?

You can upload the following image formats on **UHCprovider.com** through the Prior Authorization tool in Link:

- Images can be copied and pasted into a Microsoft Word document (.doc or .docx) or into a portable document format (.pdf).
- Alternatively, images can be uploaded directly in one of the following formats:
 - Compressed image (.jpg or .jpeg)
 - Bitmap (.bmp)
 - Graphics interchange format (.gif)
 - Portable network graphics (.png)
 - Tagged image file format (.tiff)

Files should be no larger than 25MB.

How do I share images?

You can share images in the following ways:

Print screen

When you view the applicable image on your screen, you can take a “screen shot” by pressing the [Control] and [Print Screen]* keys at the same time. Open a blank Microsoft Word document, or other program that allows items to be pasted, and right click to select Paste. Save the file and upload to the portal.

**The key may be labeled [Prt Scr] or abbreviated similarly.*

Office notes

Request clinical staff to select images of interest for your review and place them in a distinct file location. Copy and paste these images into your pre-operative discussion office note. Submit your pre-operative discussion office note with attached images by uploading the file to the portal.

Secure email

If you're unable to upload the image to the portal, submit the prior authorization without the image.

A representative from UnitedHealthcare will contact you to request an image. At that time, ask the representative to provide directions for secure email. After confirming your email information, we'll email directions to you.

Who can I contact if I have questions?

If you have questions, please call the Provider Services number on the back of the member's UnitedHealthcare ID card.



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