

November 27, 2023

Dear Provider,

Absolute Total Care and Wellcare is committed to continuous improvement of quality services for our members. We are pleased to announce our expanded partnership with National Imaging Associates, Inc. (NIA)* to implement a new Musculoskeletal (MSK) Management program. This program is consistent with industry-wide efforts to ensure clinically appropriate care and to manage the increased utilization of these services.

New Program Starts February 1, 2024

The MSK program includes prior authorization for non-emergent outpatient interventional spine pain management services (IPM), and inpatient and outpatient hip, knee, shoulder, lumbar, and cervical spine surgeries for Absolute Total Care Marketplace and Medicaid members, Wellcare Medicare of South Carolina members, and Wellcare Prime by Absolute Total Care (Medicare-Medicaid Plan) members.

- Absolute Total Care and Wellcare will oversee the MSK program and continue to be responsible for claims adjudication and medical policies.
- NIA will manage IPM services and inpatient and outpatient MSK surgeries through the existing contractual relationships with Absolute Total Care and Wellcare.

Providers can contact NIA on February 1, 2024 to get prior authorization for procedures scheduled on or after February 1, 2024. This outlines the specific procedures requiring prior authorization:

IPM Component: Prior authorization will be required for these non-emergent outpatient IPM services:

- Spinal Epidural Injections
- Paravertebral Facet Joint Injections or Blocks
- Paravertebral Facet Joint Denervation (Radiofrequency (RF) Neurolysis)
- Sacroiliac Joint Injections
- Sympathetic Nerve Blocks
- Intrathecal Pump Trials
- Spinal Cord Stimulators

MSK Surgeries: Prior authorization will be required for the following non-emergent inpatient and outpatient MSK surgeries: hip, knee, shoulder, lumbar and cervical.

Hip

- Revision/Conversion Hip Arthroplasty
- Total Hip Arthroplasty/Resurfacing
- Femoroacetabular Impingement (FAI) Hip Surgery (includes CAM/pincer & labral repair)
- Hip Surgery – Other (includes synovectomy, loose body removal, debridement, diagnostic hip arthroscopy, and extra-articular arthroscopy knee)

*Effective 1/20/2023, National Imaging Associates, Inc. is now a subsidiary of Evolent Health. Evolent Health and its affiliates and subsidiaries collectively referred to as “Evolent.”

Knee

- Revision Knee Arthroplasty
- Total Knee Arthroplasty (TKA)
- Partial-Unicompartmental Knee Arthroplasty (UKA)
- Knee Manipulation under Anesthesia (MUA)
- Knee Ligament Reconstruction/Repair
- Knee Meniscectomy/Meniscal Repair/Meniscal Transplant
- Knee Surgery – Other (includes synovectomy, loose body removal, diagnostic knee arthroscopy, debridement with or without chondroplasty, lateral release/patellar realignment, articular cartilage restoration)

Shoulder

- Revision Shoulder Arthroplasty
- Total/Reverse Shoulder Arthroplasty or Resurfacing
- Partial Shoulder Arthroplasty/Hemiarthroplasty
- Shoulder Rotator Cuff Repair
- Shoulder Labral Repair
- Frozen Shoulder Repair/Adhesive Capsulitis
- Shoulder Surgery – Other (includes debridement, manipulation, decompression, tenotomy, tenodesis, synovectomy, claviclectomy, diagnostic shoulder arthroscopy)

Lumbar

- Lumbar Microdiscectomy
- Lumbar Decompression (Laminotomy, Laminectomy, Facetectomy & Foraminotomy)
- Lumbar Spine Fusion (Arthrodesis) with or without Decompression – Single & Multiple Levels
- Sacroiliac Joint Fusion

Cervical

- Cervical Anterior Decompression with Fusion – Single & Multiple Levels
- Cervical Posterior Decompression with Fusion – Single & Multiple Levels
- Cervical Posterior Decompression (without fusion)
- Cervical Artificial Disc Replacement
- Cervical Anterior Decompression (without fusion)

KEY PROVISIONS:

- It is the responsibility of the ordering physician to obtain prior authorization for all IPM procedures and MSK surgeries managed by NIA.
- NIA does not manage prior authorization for emergency MSK surgery cases that are admitted through the emergency room or for MSK surgery procedures outside of those procedures listed above.
- The ordering physician must obtain prior authorization with NIA prior to performing the surgery/procedure.

- Facility admissions do not require a separate prior authorization. However, the facility should ensure that an NIA prior authorization has been obtained prior to scheduling the surgery/procedure.

MSK surgeries other than those outlined above will continue to follow Absolute Total Care and Wellcare prior authorization requirements for hospital admissions and elective surgeries.

We appreciate your support and look forward to your assistance in assuring that our members and your patients receive quality, clinically appropriate services.

We will provide additional information as we get closer to the implementation date. Please contact Provider Services if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Absolute Total Care
Wellcare of South Carolina