

Prior authorization for gastroenterology services

Frequently asked questions

Overview

For dates of service beginning on or after June 1, 2023, you'll be required to obtain prior authorization for gastroenterology endoscopy services for UnitedHealthcare commercial plan members, in accordance with the terms of the member's benefit plan.

Affected procedures: Esophagogastroduodenoscopies (EGD), capsule endoscopies, diagnostic and surveillance colonoscopies. Please note that screening colonoscopy procedures are not included in this new medical necessity review requirement. See more details in the "Important Details" section.

Please refer to the most current **CPT® code list** and **crosswalk** that fall under the gastroenterology endoscopy services prior authorization requirements.

Affected plans: This requirement pertains to patients with UnitedHealthcare commercial plans, including UnitedHealthcare, UnitedHealthcare Plan of the River Valley, Neighborhood Health Partnership, UnitedHealthcare Level Funded and Oxford Health Plans.

Affected states: This requirement affects members in all states, except Rhode Island and Kentucky. Note: This policy is not effective in Iowa until Aug. 1, 2023. This requirement does not pertain to the U.S. territories (U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and Puerto Rico).

Important details

- We may already require prior authorization for some of these procedures if the planned site of service is an outpatient hospital. **However, for dates of service beginning on or after June 1, 2023, we'll require prior authorization for these procedures regardless of the outpatient location in which you plan to perform the procedure.**
- Screening colonoscopy procedures are not included in this new medical necessity review requirement; however, per our current **Screening Colonoscopy Procedures – Site of Service – Commercial Medical Policy** and **Screening Colonoscopy Procedures – Site of Service – Oxford Clinical Policy**, site of service medical necessity review continues to apply if the screening colonoscopy procedure is planned to be performed in an outpatient hospital.
- Gastroenterology endoscopy procedures performed in, and appropriately billed with, the following places of service aren't subject to prior authorization requirements: Emergency rooms, urgent care centers, hospital observation units and inpatient settings.
- We do not require prior authorization if we are secondary to a payer, including Medicare
- The prior authorization request is valid for 90 calendar days. We'll use the issue date of the prior authorization number as the starting point for the 90-day period. Please request a new prior authorization number if you do not complete the procedure within the 90-day period.

Frequently asked questions

Why is UnitedHealthcare requiring prior authorization for gastrointestinal endoscopy procedures?

In recent years, studies have shown evidence that overutilization of invasive non-screening (surveillance and diagnostic) colonoscopy, EGD and capsule endoscopy procedures in certain situations exposes patients to unnecessary risk and costs. As part of our efforts toward improving health care outcomes and cost of care, we use medical necessity reviews for authorization to determine if non-screening gastroenterology endoscopy services are clinically appropriate.

How does the review process affect decisions between physicians and their patients?

We support informed patient choice and respect care decisions between physicians and our plan members. Our coverage determinations reflect whether or not a service or site is covered under a member's benefit plan and do not replace treatment decisions.

How do I submit a prior authorization request?

If you determine that prior authorization is required for your patient, you can submit a request in 1 of the following ways:

- **Online:** Use the Prior Authorization and Notification tool on UHCprovider.com by following these steps:
 - Sign in to the **UnitedHealthcare Provider Portal** using your One Healthcare ID
 - Select Radiology, Cardiology, Oncology, Radiation Oncology and Gastroenterology Endoscopy Services Transactions
 - Enter the required information on the submission site

This preferred option gives you and your patient the fastest results. If you'd like training on how to submit through the portal, please visit our **Prior Authorization and Notification Interactive Guide**.

- **Phone:** Call us at 866-889-8054 (Oxford 877-773-2884), Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. in all time zones.

You can also use the Prior Authorization and Benefits tool to verify the member's eligibility and benefit coverage.

What happens after I submit a prior authorization request?

After we receive the prior authorization request with required clinical information, we'll send you a coverage determination. If you don't receive immediate approval, we'll give you instructions on how to submit additional information for a clinical review. Once you submit the additional documentation, we'll notify you and the member of the outcome. If we deny coverage, we'll provide details on how to submit an appeal.

Will UnitedHealthcare review both EGD and diagnostic and surveillance colonoscopies for medical necessity if we perform them in the same event?

Yes. We will review all EGD and diagnostic and surveillance colonoscopy services for medical necessity and site of service, if required when they are submitted in the same prior authorization request. This will help streamline the process and provide a holistic review of the medical necessity review case.

Do I need to contact UnitedHealthcare if I make changes to the authorization?

In many cases, the answer is yes. You should contact us to update any changes to the authorization.

This allows us to correctly process the claim. If you need to change the rendering health care professional, regardless of if the procedure requires a site of service medical necessity review, please call 866-889-8054.

For CPT code changes, the rendering health care professional is not required to contact us to modify the existing prior authorization record if the CPT code combination is listed in the UnitedHealthcare Gastroenterology Prior Authorization Codes and Crosswalk List.



What information do I need to submit with my prior authorization request?

- Member name, date of birth, address and member ID
- Requested procedure(s): EGD and/or capsule endoscopy and/or colonoscopy
- CPT code(s) relevant to the requested procedure(s)
- Referring provider's name, National Provider Identifier (NPI), phone number and fax number
- Rendering facility NPI, phone number and fax number
- If we request clinical information, be prepared to supply the following:
 - Relevant history and physical examination
 - Relevant summary of the patient's clinical condition
 - Imaging and/or pathology and/or laboratory reports, as indicated, relevant to the requested procedure comorbidities, if applicable
 - Indication for the specified procedure
 - Prior treatment regimens
 - Results of prior endoscopic procedures, if relevant
 - Genetic testing results, if applicable

If I receive an authorization number, does that guarantee that UnitedHealthcare will pay the claim?

No. Receipt of an authorization number does not guarantee or authorize payment. Payment for covered services is contingent upon various factors, including coverage within the member's benefit plan and your participation agreement with us. Payment is also subject to applicable state regulations.

Resources

Where can I locate the medical policies/clinical guidelines?

You can find all of our medical policies/clinical guidelines on [UHCprovider.com](https://www.uhcprovider.com), including:

- [Screening Colonoscopy Procedures – Site of Service – Commercial Medical Policy](#)
- [Screening Colonoscopy Procedures – Site of Service – Oxford Policy](#)
- [Outpatient Surgical Procedures – Site of Service – Commercial](#)
- [Outpatient Surgical Procedures – Site of Service – Oxford](#)
- [Gastrointestinal Colonoscopy Procedure Guidelines – Commercial](#)
- [Gastrointestinal Endoscopy Procedure Guidelines – Commercial](#)
- [Capsule Endoscopy Procedures Guidelines – Commercial](#)
- [Oxford - Gastroenterology and Capsule Endoscopy Guidelines](#)



Who do I call if I have questions? Please contact Provider Services at **877-842-3210**.

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