



# Wellcare Alabama Musculoskeletal Care Management (MSK) Program Quick Reference Guide for Physicians/Surgeons

**March 1, 2024**

Wellcare has entered into an agreement with National Imaging Associates, Inc. (NIA)<sup>1</sup>, to implement a Musculoskeletal Care Management (MSK) Program. This program includes prior authorization for non-emergent MSK procedures: outpatient interventional spine pain management (IPM) services and inpatient and outpatient hip, knee, shoulder, lumbar and cervical spine surgeries. This decision is consistent with industry-wide efforts to ensure clinically appropriate quality of care and to manage the increasing utilization of these services.

The following types of services are included in the MSK program for all Wellcare Medicare members. Providers may begin contacting NIA on March 1, 2024, to obtain prior authorization for procedures scheduled on or after March 1, 2024.

- Outpatient IPM (Effective January 1, 2022)
- Inpatient and outpatient hip surgeries
- Inpatient and outpatient knee surgeries
- Inpatient and outpatient shoulder surgeries
- Inpatient and outpatient lumbar and cervical spine surgeries

## Prior Authorization Implementation

As a provider of MSK services that require prior authorization, it is essential that you develop a process to ensure that the appropriate authorization number(s) has been obtained.

It is the responsibility of the ordering physician/surgeon and rendering facility to ensure that prior authorization was obtained, when necessary. Payment will be denied for procedures performed without a prior authorization, including the MSK surgery hospital admission, and the member cannot be balance-billed for such procedures.

## Procedures Requiring Prior Authorization\*

### Outpatient Interventional Spine Pain Management Services (Effective January 1, 2022):

- Spinal Epidural Injections
- Paravertebral Facet Joint Injections or Blocks
- Paravertebral Facet Joint Denervation (Radiofrequency (RF) Neurolysis)
- Sacroiliac Joint Injections
- Sympathetic Nerve Blocks (Effective January 1, 2023)

\*A separate prior authorization number is required for each procedure ordered.

<sup>1</sup>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."

- Spinal Cord Stimulators (Effective March 1, 2024)

**Outpatient and Inpatient Hip Surgeries: \*\***

- 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)

**Outpatient and Inpatient Knee Surgeries:\*\***

- 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)

\*\*Surgeon must request surgery authorization for each joint, even if bilateral joint surgery is to be performed on the same date.

**Outpatient and Inpatient Shoulder Surgeries:\*\***

- Revision Shoulder Arthroplasty
- Total/Reverse 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)

**Outpatient and Inpatient Spine Surgeries:**

- Lumbar Microdiscectomy
- Lumbar Decompression (Laminotomy, Laminectomy, Facetomy & Foraminotomy)
- Lumbar Spine Fusion (Arthrodesis) With or Without Decompression – Single & Multiple Levels
- 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 – Single & Two Levels
- Cervical Anterior Decompression (without fusion)
- Sacroiliac Joint Fusion

NIA manages the MSK program through existing contractual relationships with Wellcare. If an urgent/emergent clinical situation exists outside of a hospital emergency room, please contact NIA immediately with the appropriate clinical information for an expedited review. The number to call to initiate a prior authorization request is 1-800-424-5388.

Please refer to NIA's website [www.RadMD.com](http://www.RadMD.com) to obtain the Wellcare / NIA Billable CPT® Codes Claim Resolution/Utilization Review Matrix for all of the CPT-4 codes that NIA authorizes on behalf of Wellcare.

### **Prior Authorization Information**

To ensure that authorization numbers have been obtained, please adhere to the following guidelines.

#### **IPM:**

- Procedures performed in the emergency room or on an inpatient basis do not require prior authorization through NIA.
- Outpatient IPM services managed by NIA require a prior authorization for each procedure performed.
- It is the responsibility of the ordering physician to obtain authorization for all interventional pain management procedures outlined. Failure to do so may result in non-payment of your claim.
- Authorizations are valid for 90 days from the date of request.

#### **Outpatient and Inpatient MSK Surgeries:**

- Emergency musculoskeletal surgery (admitted via the Emergency Room) do not require prior authorization through NIA.
- Non-emergent outpatient and inpatient hip, knee, shoulder, and spine surgery services require prior authorization through NIA.
- **Note:** The ordering physician must obtain prior authorization with NIA prior to performing the surgery. 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.
- NIA's medical necessity review and determination is for the authorization of the surgeon's professional services and type of surgery being performed. NIA will provide Wellcare with the surgery type requested and authorization determination.
- Authorizations are valid for 90 days from the date of request for outpatient surgeries and 90 days from the date of request for inpatient.

### **Checking Authorizations**

You can check on the status of authorization requests quickly and easily by going to the NIA website, [www.RadMD.com](http://www.RadMD.com). After sign-in, select the **My Exam Requests** tab to view authorization requests and verify status.

### **Submitting Claims**

Claims continue to go directly to Wellcare. Please send your claims for MSK procedures to the following address:

Wellcare Health Plans  
Attn: Claims Department  
P. O. Box 31372  
Tampa, FL 33631-3372

#### **Quick Contacts**

- Website: [www.RadMD.com](http://www.RadMD.com)
- Toll Free Phone Numbers:
- 1-800-424-5388

Providers are encouraged to use EDI claims submission.

The Wellcare payor ID number is 14163.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

In this section NIA addresses commonly asked questions received from providers.

#### **Where can I find NIA's Guidelines for MSK procedures?**

Guidelines can be found on NIA's website at [www.RadMD.com](http://www.RadMD.com).

#### **Is prior authorization necessary if Wellcare is not the member's primary insurance?**

No.

#### **What does the NIA authorization number look like?**

The NIA authorization number consists of alpha/numeric characters (e.g., 1234X567). In some cases, the ordering provider may instead receive an NIA tracking number (not the same as an authorization number) if the physician's authorization request is not approved at the time of initial contact. Providers can use either number to track the status of their request on the RadMD website or via our Interactive Voice Response telephone system.

#### **Who can I contact at NIA for questions, complaints, and appeals, etc.?**

Please use the following NIA contacts by type of issue:

- To educate your staff on NIA procedures and to assist you with any provider issues or concerns, contact your NIA Area Provider Relations Manager.
- Preauthorization and claims payment complaints/appeals: Follow the instructions on your non-authorization letter or Explanation of Benefit (EOB)/Explanation of Payment (EOP) notification.

#### **How do referring/ordering physicians know who NIA is?**

Wellcare and NIA share training and education materials with physicians and surgeons prior to the implementation. Wellcare and NIA also coordinate outreach and orientation for providers.

#### **What does the member ID card look like? Does it have both NIA and Wellcare information on the card? Or is there two cards?**

The Wellcare member ID card does not have NIA identifying information on it.