



**Questions and Answers:  
Radiology Preauthorization Program for  
High-Tech Outpatient Diagnostic Imaging Procedures**

**Effective April 15, 2011 for the Community Health Alliance service area**

Beginning April 15, 2011, prior authorization (with review of medical appropriateness) will be required for all high-tech outpatient diagnostic imaging procedures for your Aetna patients with network-based PPO and Medicare benefits plans, excluding Medicare Private fee-for-Service plans. Specifically, preauthorization will be required through MedSolutions for MRI/MRA, PET scans, Cardiac CT Angiography, nuclear cardiology, stress echocardiography and diagnostic right and left heart catheterization.

**1. When will this change be effective?**

This change will be effective April 15, 2011.

**2. Which high-tech outpatient diagnostic imaging procedures require preauthorization?**

Preauthorization is required for the following outpatient diagnostic imaging procedures:

- CT scan (including CTA)
- Nuclear cardiology
- MRI/MRA
- PET scan
- Stress echocardiography
- Diagnostic right and left heart catheterization

**3. How do physicians submit preauthorization requests to MedSolutions?**

You can submit preauthorization requests to MedSolutions for outpatient diagnostic imaging procedures by phone at 1-888-693-3211 or by fax at 1-888-693-3210 during normal business hours or as required by federal or state regulations. You can also submit requests through MedSolutions' secure website at **[www.MedSolutionsOnline.com](http://www.MedSolutionsOnline.com)**. Detailed information will be provided prior to implementation.

**4. How does the MedSolutions preauthorization program work?**

For routine preauthorization requests, the ordering physician should contact MedSolutions with the required medical information prior to the procedure being scheduled and performed. The request will be immediately approved, or additional information will be requested. Upon receipt of this information, MedSolutions will render a decision within two business days or as required by federal or state regulations.

**5. Is preauthorization required for emergency situations?**

No. It is not necessary to call MedSolutions retrospectively to preauthorize any imaging procedure performed during an emergency room visit.

**6. How is observation/rapid treatment handled?**

Imaging services that occur during observation/rapid treatment services do not require preauthorization, nor do these services require the physician to contact MedSolutions within 14 calendar days (or as required by federal or state regulations) of rendering the service. These services are easily identifiable in the Aetna claims systems and will be paid without preauthorization from MedSolutions.

## **7. What kind of response time can ordering physicians expect for preauthorization?**

In many cases, especially when the caller requesting the review has sufficient clinical documentation, the request can be preauthorized during the first phone call. Approximately 60-65 percent of all requests are approved during the initial phone call. MedSolutions generally requires 2 business days after receipt of sufficient clinical information to review a request for medical necessity on non-urgent cases. In certain cases, the review process can take longer if additional clinical information is required to make a determination.

To optimize efficiency for your office and avoid situations where a repeat phone call is required, it is best to have someone knowledgeable of the case and with access to all relevant clinical information make the request. The following information is generally required to process a request for coverage:

- The patient's name, address and Aetna member ID
- Diagnosis for which the study is being performed
- Notes from the patient's last visit related to the diagnosis
- Previous diagnostic studies and treatment relevant to the condition

## **8. Can MedSolutions handle multiple requests for preauthorization per phone call?**

Yes, within reason. We ask that no more than 10 preauthorization requests be given during a single phone call. You may prefer the convenience of the Internet for batching preauthorization requests ([www.MedSolutionsOnline.com](http://www.MedSolutionsOnline.com)).

## **9. Do physicians have to obtain preauthorization before they call to schedule an appointment?**

Except in an emergency, physicians should always obtain preauthorization before scheduling the patient.

## **10. For how long is a preauthorization number valid?**

The preauthorization number is valid for 90 days from the approval date. When a procedure is preauthorized, MedSolutions will use the day the call was initiated as the starting point for the 90-day period in which the examination must be completed.

## **11. What if my office has an urgent request?**

The ordering physician should call MedSolutions with the required medical information prior to the procedure being scheduled and performed. The ordering physician should advise MedSolutions that it is an urgent request. The request will be immediately approved, or additional information will be requested. MedSolutions will turn around medically urgent requests within four hours, or as required by federal or state regulations.

Alternately, the physician can perform the urgent procedure and call MedSolutions prior to submitting a claim to Aetna, but no later than 14 calendar days after performing the procedure (or as required by federal or state regulations) to request preauthorization. MedSolutions will then follow the process used to evaluate routine preauthorization requests.

## **12. What if my office staff forgets to call MedSolutions and then schedules an imaging procedure requiring preauthorization?**

It is important to notify office staff and educate them about this new policy. It is the ordering physician's responsibility to obtain preauthorization. Providers rendering MRI/MRA, nuclear cardiology, PET scans, CT scans, stress echocardiography and diagnostic right and left heart catheterization should verify that the ordering physician has obtained the necessary preauthorization prior to scheduling. Failure to do so may result in denial of your claim, and you will not be able to bill the member for these services.

## **13. What does the MedSolutions preauthorization number look like?**

The MedSolutions preauthorization number consists of various alphanumeric combinations, for example, A1234567.

**14. If two preauthorization numbers are associated with the patient encounter, which one should be printed on the claim?**

You do not need to enter the MedSolutions preauthorization number on the claim form or via the electronic transaction. We do recommend, however, that imaging providers document and archive imaging preauthorization numbers.

**15. If a rural hospital only has a mobile MRI available to the facility on Tuesday and Thursday, and a patient comes into the emergency room on Saturday, can the emergency room physician write an order for an MRI to be taken on Tuesday and have it considered an emergency and bypass preauthorization?**

It would be difficult to consider the situation emergent if the patient can wait until Tuesday. If the situation truly is emergent, the ordering physician should have the patient transferred immediately to a hospital that has MRI equipment, or the emergency room physician can make the preauthorization request.

**16. Is preauthorization necessary when Aetna is not the member's primary health coverage?**

Even if Aetna is secondary, preauthorization is still required for high-tech radiology procedures for eligible members, unless secondary to the Aetna Medicare Open<sup>SM</sup> Plan (PFFS), a private fee-for-service plan.

**17. Can a participating chiropractor order images?**

Yes.

**18. Is a separate preauthorization number needed for a CT-guided biopsy?**

No. CT-guided surgical procedures do not require preauthorization from MedSolutions. However, the physician should verify with Aetna if preauthorization is required for the surgical procedure.

**19. What happens if a patient is preauthorized for a CT of the abdomen and, during the procedure, the radiologist or rendering physician feels an additional study of the pelvis is needed?**

The radiologist or rendering physician should proceed with the pelvic study. The rendering facility should then contact MedSolutions to submit a radiology report and seek authorization for the added study. This should be done after the study is complete, but prior to the claim being submitted to Aetna. This should occur no later than 14 calendar days after the procedure, or as required by federal or state regulations.

In keeping with sound medical practice, it is expected that the radiologist or designated person from the radiology facility would also notify the patient's referring physician of pertinent clinical findings which warranted additional study.

**20. If MedSolutions denies preauthorization of an imaging study, can we appeal the decision?**

If a request for a preauthorization is denied, a MedSolutions representative will contact the ordering physician via fax, or as required by federal or state regulation, to inform the ordering physician of the determination. This fax will include instructions on how to request a peer-to-peer conversation with a MedSolutions medical director. During the peer-to-peer conversation, the two physicians can discuss the clinical indications of the case and decide the appropriate imaging for the patient. If MedSolutions still makes the decision to deny the request at the end of this conversation, the ordering physician can appeal to Aetna.

Since Aetna retains responsibility for appeals and grievances, there is no change from how these are currently handled. Therefore, please submit written appeals to the address provided on the initial determination letter.

Physicians are always welcome to have a peer-to-peer discussion with a MedSolutions physician about any decision by calling MedSolutions at 1-888-693-3211 during normal business hours, or as required by federal or state regulations. Physicians can schedule the peer-to-peer discussion with MedSolutions to avoid hold times and disruption to their patient office hours.

**21. Which Aetna benefits plans are affected by this change?**

Network-based PPO and Medicare plans, excluding Medicare Private fee-for-Service plans, are affected by this change.

**22. Which types of providers are affected?**

All Aetna participating providers who request and/or provide high-tech radiology and cardiac services are affected. This includes both facilities and physicians (both primary care and specialists).

**23. Who should I contact with questions?**

If you have additional questions about the Radiology Preauthorization Program, please contact MedSolutions at 1-888-693-3211, by fax at 1-888-693-3210 or at **[www.MedSolutionsOnline.com](http://www.MedSolutionsOnline.com)**.

If you have questions related to Aetna policies, 1-888-MD Aetna (1-888-632-3862) for all other plans; select the “Precertification” option.

Aetna is the brand name used for products and services provided by one or more of the Aetna group of subsidiary companies. The Aetna companies that offer, underwrite or administer benefits coverage include Aetna Health Inc., Aetna Health of California Inc., Aetna Life Insurance Company, Aetna Health Insurance Company and Strategic Resource Company. (Aetna)

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