

# TUFTS Health Plan

## Prior Authorization for Outpatient High-Tech Imaging Services

### Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Is NIA authorization required for all radiological procedures?**  
No, only outpatient CT/CTA, MRI/MRA, PET, and Nuclear Cardiology procedures require authorization as indicated on the enclosed procedure code list.
- 2. Who is responsible for obtaining the NIA authorization?**  
The ordering physician is always responsible for obtaining an authorization number from NIA prior to scheduling the procedure.
- 3. Are there situations that do not require prior NIA authorization?**  
Yes, there are four situations that do not require prior authorization from NIA when billed with the applicable place of service code:
  - When the procedure is ordered as part of emergency room services
  - When the procedure is ordered as part of an observation bed stay
  - When the procedure is ordered as part of surgical day care or minor surgery
  - When the procedure is ordered as part of an inpatient stay
- 4. What is the toll free telephone number for the NIA Call Center?**  
(866) 642-9703
- 5. What are NIA's Call Center hours of operation?**  
Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST
- 6. What information does the ordering provider need to expedite an authorization call to NIA?**  
The caller will be asked for the following clinical information:
  - Patient history and diagnosis
  - Reason for the study
  - Results of previous imaging studies
  - History of medical or surgical treatment
- 7. Should NIA authorization take place before scheduling an appointment with the rendering provider?**  
Yes, authorization should be completed before scheduling the patient. Rendering providers are advised to schedule patients only when they confirm that authorization has been completed.

- 8. Can NIA handle authorization of more than one planned procedure in one phone call?**  
Yes, you may call with multiple requests. Many offices find it easiest to batch all patients managed by NIA (regardless of health plan or plan-specific toll-free number) together and call once per day, either midday or towards the end of the day.
- 9. What is the process for notifying NIA of emergency procedures ordered outside of normal NIA business hours?**  
Emergency CT/CTA, MRI/MRA, PET scan, or Nuclear Cardiology procedures rendered at a location other than a hospital emergency room require authorization within two business days of the service. The ordering provider should make the request.
- 10. Can the rendering provider call NIA to notify them of an emergency request for services delivered outside of a hospital emergency room?**  
Yes, the rendering provider can call NIA to start the authorization process. NIA will contact the ordering provider to obtain clinical information to complete the authorization retroactively.
- 11. Can non-emergency services be delivered outside of NIA business hour consultation?**  
Only urgent and emergent tests can be completed without an authorization number. NIA will not process retrospective requests that are non-urgent or outside of the two business day time frame.
- 12. What is NIA's process for obtaining additional clinical information to evaluate a planned procedure?**  
A NIA clinician will contact the ordering physician's clinician to obtain additional clinical information. For a small volume of calls, a NIA Board Certified Specialist will need to consult with the ordering physician.
- 13. Will there be medical necessity denials?**  
Yes, after evaluation using nationally recognized, evidence based guidelines, some requests may be denied.
- 14. Will there be administrative denials?**  
Yes, if NIA is not notified or the NIA authorization process has not been completed, both technical and professional claims will be denied for lack of authorization.
- 15. Can non-contracted providers order advanced imaging services at contracted facilities for Tufts Health Plan members?**  
Yes, all ordering providers (contracted and non-contracted) will be directed to contracted facilities for services, whenever feasible.

**16. Is the date of service and rendering provider information required before notifying NIA?**

No, the date and rendering provider information is not required. However, at the end of the authorization process, the NIA representative will ask where the procedure is to be performed and the anticipated date of service. If the ordering physician does not specify a rendering provider, NIA will assist in identifying an appropriate facility. NIA will offer to transfer the ordering provider call to the facility once the process has been completed.

**17. Is there a way to bypass the NIA recorded announcement?**

Yes, when dialing the toll-free number you hear a seven second system greeting that identifies the NIA Imaging Call Center. The announcement then instructs you to press *Option 1* to initiate a new request for imaging consultation or *Option 2* for status inquiry about a previous authorization. The announcement also provides information that emergency procedures do not require authorization. The entire greeting may be bypassed by immediately pressing the desired option when the announcement starts to play.

**18. Can a clinician other than a physician order advanced imaging procedures?**

Yes, any clinician that currently orders these procedures will be able to order them under this program. They must follow the same process as ordering physicians.

**19. Who will receive the approved transaction authorization number from NIA?**

Upon completion of the process, NIA will automatically send a fax to the ordering physician indicating the procedure, the facility, and the period for which the authorization number is valid. If NIA does not issue an authorization number to the ordering provider on the initial phone call, they will issue a tracking number to the ordering provider. The ordering provider can subsequently use that tracking number to track the status of the request at [www.radmd.com](http://www.radmd.com). **If the ordering physician does not complete the authorization process, the authorization status will be “transaction denied for consultation non-compliance, no member liability.”**

**20. Will the member also receive confirmation?**

Yes, the member will receive a letter indicating the procedure, the facility, and the period for which the authorization number is valid.

**21. How can the NIA transaction number be identified?**

NIA issues a 7-digit alphanumeric number. When the authorization is received at Tufts Health Plan, a ‘Y’ is added at the beginning to make the number 8 digits.

**22. How soon after the NIA authorization does the procedure need to occur?**

The authorization number is valid for 60 days after the authorization date.

**23. After NIA has been notified, can the ordering physician change the planned procedure, the servicing facility, or the date of the procedure?**

Yes, but the NIA Call Center must be contacted if the planned procedure or the rendering provider changes. The procedure can take place on any date within the 60 days that the authorization number is valid. If the date of service is rescheduled beyond the 60 days, the NIA Call Center must be contacted.

**24. Can office staff fax requestors use an electronic channel, such as NEHEN?**

Not at this time. The process is consultative, so it is necessary to contact the NIA Call Center by telephone at **(866) 642-9703**. Authorization status will be available through [www.radmd.com](http://www.radmd.com) for rendering providers and ordering providers who have a tracking number.

**25. Can rendering provider staff use an electronic channel to verify that NIA authorization has been completed?**

Rendering providers will be able to access listings of completed requests and authorization numbers via NIA's Web site, [www.radmd.com](http://www.radmd.com).

**26. Can an NIA authorization record be edited using NEHEN?**

No, only NIA will be able to edit an authorization record. Call NIA with any change to the procedure, facility, or date of service (if the new date is beyond the established 60 day range).

**27. What if the office staff forgets to call NIA and then schedules an imaging procedure requiring authorization?**

If a contracted provider performs a non-emergency procedure that was not called in to NIA as part of the authorization process, neither the professional or technical components will be paid and the member will **not** be responsible for payment.

**28. What happens if a patient is scheduled for a procedure, and the radiologist or rendering physician feels an additional study is needed? (For example, extension of the study to include an additional body area.)**

If the radiologist identifies a need to extend the examination to a contiguous body area, the rendering facility should notify NIA of the extended study. NIA will update the authorization record to include the extended examination.

**29. Who is responsible for obtaining authorization from NIA when an outpatient advanced imaging service is ordered for a patient in a skilled nursing facility or inpatient rehabilitation facility?**

Authorization is not required for patients whose place of service is inpatient or SNF/Nursing Home.

**30. When will Tufts Health Plan patient information be visible at [www.radmd.com](http://www.radmd.com)?**

If you have an existing account, your Tufts Health Plan patients will appear as of September 26, 2005. If you register to use [www.radmd.com](http://www.radmd.com) for your Tufts Health Plan patients, and you have patients from other health plans managed by NIA, those patients will also appear on your listing.

**31. Would NIA issue one authorization number to cover two separate tests performed on the same date of service, e.g., a CT scan of the neck and one of the ankles?**

No, each test requires its own authorization number.

**32. If a patient needs a CT in preparation for radiation therapy, is authorization necessary?**

No, consultation is not necessary for this.

**33. What happens if the member/physician does not agree that the request should be denied?**

The denial letter to the member and the fax to the physician clearly identify the process for an appeal.