

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Computed Tomography (CT) Scan – Site of Service

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[Instructions for Use](#)

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Related Commercial/Individual Exchange Policies

- [Breast Imaging for Screening and Diagnosing Cancer](#)
- [Preventive Care Services](#)

Application

UnitedHealthcare Commercial

This Medical Policy applies to UnitedHealthcare Commercial benefit plans, except UnitedHealthcare West benefit plans.

UnitedHealthcare Individual Exchange

This Medical Policy applies to Individual Exchange benefit plans in all states except for Maryland, Massachusetts, Texas, and Wisconsin.

Coverage Rationale

A magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or computed tomography (CT) imaging procedure in the hospital outpatient department is considered medically necessary for individuals who meet any of the following criteria:

- Are participating in a clinical trial that requires a specific imaging protocol or equipment not available in a freestanding facility
- Are scheduled for the MRI/CT imaging procedure within 24 hours of a hospital specialist appointment at the same hospital-based facility where the procedure is requested
- Have a known allergy to a contrast agent used for the procedure
- Have a known chronic disease undergoing active treatment, when direct comparison to prior studies requires the same imaging protocol or equipment obtained at the same hospital-based facility where the procedure is requested
- Have a systemic cancer on active treatment, when restaging studies require the same imaging protocol or equipment used for prior studies obtained at the same hospital-based facility where the procedure is requested
- Pre-procedure imaging which is done within 24 hours of the interventional or surgical procedure and is an integral part of the planned procedure
- Require obstetrical observation
- Require perinatology services
- Under 18 years of age

An MRI/CT imaging procedure in the hospital outpatient department is also considered medically necessary when there are no geographically accessible appropriate alternative sites for the individual to undergo the procedure, including but not limited to the following:

- Moderate or deep sedation or general anesthesia is required for the procedure and a freestanding facility providing such sedation is not available; or

- The equipment for the size of the individual is not available; or
- Open MRI is required because the member has a documented diagnosis of claustrophobia and/or severe anxiety which is not available in a freestanding facility

An MRI/CT imaging procedure in the hospital outpatient department is considered medically necessary when imaging in a physician’s office or freestanding imaging center would reasonably be expected to delay care and adversely impact health outcome.

All other MRI/CT imaging procedures at a hospital-based imaging department or facility are considered not medically necessary. This includes but is not limited to imaging for:

- Cancer screening
- Initial diagnosis and/or initial staging for suspected or known cancer
- Non-cancerous musculoskeletal conditions
- Surveillance of cancer in remission with no clinical suspicion for change in disease status

Note: Authorization is not required for procedures performed in an emergency room, observation unit, urgent care center, or during an inpatient stay.

Medical Records Documentation Used for Reviews

Benefit coverage for health services is determined by the member specific benefit plan document and applicable laws that may require coverage for a specific service. Medical records documentation may be required to assess whether the member meets the clinical criteria for coverage but does not guarantee coverage of the service requested; refer to the guidelines titled [Medical Records Documentation Used for Reviews](#).

Applicable Codes

The following list(s) of procedure and/or diagnosis codes is provided for reference purposes only and may not be all inclusive. Listing of a code in this policy does not imply that the service described by the code is a covered or non-covered health service. Benefit coverage for health services is determined by the member specific benefit plan document and applicable laws that may require coverage for a specific service. The inclusion of a code does not imply any right to reimbursement or guarantee claim payment. Other Policies and Guidelines may apply.

CPT Code	Description
Computed Tomography	
70450	Computed tomography, head or brain; without contrast material
70460	Computed tomography, head or brain; with contrast material(s)
70470	Computed tomography, head or brain; without contrast material, followed by contrast material(s) and further sections
70480	Computed tomography, orbit, sella, or posterior fossa or outer, middle, or inner ear; without contrast material
70481	Computed tomography, orbit, sella, or posterior fossa or outer, middle, or inner ear; with contrast material(s)
70482	Computed tomography, orbit, sella, or posterior fossa or outer, middle, or inner ear; without contrast material, followed by contrast material(s) and further sections
70486	Computed tomography, maxillofacial area; without contrast material
70487	Computed tomography, maxillofacial area; with contrast material(s)
70488	Computed tomography, maxillofacial area; without contrast material, followed by contrast material(s) and further sections
70490	Computed tomography, soft tissue neck; without contrast material
70491	Computed tomography, soft tissue neck; with contrast material(s)
70492	Computed tomography, soft tissue neck; without contrast material followed by contrast material(s) and further sections
70496	Computed tomographic angiography, head, with contrast material(s), including noncontrast images, if performed, and image postprocessing

CPT Code	Description
Computed Tomography	
70498	Computed tomographic angiography, neck, with contrast material(s), including noncontrast images, if performed, and image postprocessing
71250	Computed tomography, thorax, diagnostic; without contrast material
71260	Computed tomography, thorax, diagnostic; with contrast material(s)
71270	Computed tomography, thorax, diagnostic; without contrast material, followed by contrast material(s) and further sections
71271	Computed tomography, thorax, low dose for lung cancer screening, without contrast material(s)
71275	Computed tomographic angiography, chest (noncoronary), with contrast material(s), including noncontrast images, if performed, and image postprocessing
72125	Computed tomography, cervical spine; without contrast material
72126	Computed tomography, cervical spine; with contrast material
72127	Computed tomography, cervical spine; without contrast material, followed by contrast material(s) and further sections
72128	Computed tomography, thoracic spine; without contrast material
72129	Computed tomography, thoracic spine; with contrast material
72130	Computed tomography, thoracic spine; without contrast material, followed by contrast material(s) and further sections
72131	Computed tomography, lumbar spine; without contrast material
72132	Computed tomography, lumbar spine; with contrast material
72133	Computed tomography, lumbar spine; without contrast material, followed by contrast material(s) and further sections
72191	Computed tomographic angiography, pelvis, with contrast material(s), including noncontrast images, if performed, and image postprocessing
72192	Computed tomography, pelvis; without contrast material
72193	Computed tomography, pelvis; with contrast material(s)
72194	Computed tomography, pelvis; without contrast material, followed by contrast material(s) and further sections
73200	Computed tomography, upper extremity; without contrast material
73201	Computed tomography, upper extremity; with contrast material(s)
73202	Computed tomography, upper extremity; without contrast material, followed by contrast material(s) and further sections
73206	Computed tomographic angiography, upper extremity, with contrast material(s), including noncontrast images, if performed, and image postprocessing
73700	Computed tomography, lower extremity; without contrast material
73701	Computed tomography, lower extremity; with contrast material(s)
73702	Computed tomography, lower extremity; without contrast material, followed by contrast material(s) and further sections
73706	Computed tomographic angiography, lower extremity, with contrast material(s), including noncontrast images, if performed, and image postprocessing
74150	Computed tomography, abdomen; without contrast material
74160	Computed tomography, abdomen; with contrast material(s)
74170	Computed tomography, abdomen; without contrast material, followed by contrast material(s) and further sections
74174	Computed tomographic angiography, abdomen and pelvis, with contrast material(s), including noncontrast images, if performed, and image postprocessing
74175	Computed tomographic angiography, abdomen, with contrast material(s), including noncontrast images, if performed, and image postprocessing
74176	Computed tomography, abdomen and pelvis; without contrast material

CPT Code	Description
Computed Tomography	
74177	Computed tomography, abdomen and pelvis; with contrast material(s)
74178	Computed tomography, abdomen and pelvis; without contrast material in one or both body regions, followed by contrast material(s) and further sections in one or both body regions
74261	Computed tomographic (CT) colonography, diagnostic, including image postprocessing; without contrast material
74262	Computed tomographic (CT) colonography, diagnostic, including image postprocessing; with contrast material(s) including non-contrast images, if performed
74263	Computed tomographic (CT) colonography, screening, including image postprocessing
75571	Computed tomography, heart, without contrast material, with quantitative evaluation of coronary calcium
75572	Computed tomography, heart, with contrast material, for evaluation of cardiac structure and morphology (including 3D image postprocessing, assessment of cardiac function, and evaluation of venous structures, if performed)
75573	Computed tomography, heart, with contrast material, for evaluation of cardiac structure and morphology in the setting of congenital heart disease (including 3D image postprocessing, assessment of left ventricular [LV] cardiac function, right ventricular [RV] structure and function and evaluation of vascular structures, if performed)
75574	Computed tomographic angiography, heart, coronary arteries and bypass grafts (when present), with contrast material, including 3D image postprocessing (including evaluation of cardiac structure and morphology, assessment of cardiac function, and evaluation of venous structures, if performed)
75635	Computed tomographic angiography, abdominal aorta and bilateral iliofemoral lower extremity runoff, with contrast material(s), including noncontrast images, if performed, and image postprocessing
76380	Computed tomography, limited or localized follow-up study
76497	Unlisted computed tomography procedure (e.g., diagnostic, interventional)
Magnetic Resonance Imaging	
70336	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, temporomandibular joint(s)
70540	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, orbit, face, and/or neck; without contrast material(s)
70542	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, orbit, face, and/or neck; with contrast material(s)
70543	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, orbit, face, and/or neck; without contrast material(s), followed by contrast material(s) and further sequences
70544	Magnetic resonance angiography, head; without contrast material(s)
70545	Magnetic resonance angiography, head; with contrast material(s)
70546	Magnetic resonance angiography, head; without contrast material(s), followed by contrast material(s) and further sequences
70547	Magnetic resonance angiography, neck; without contrast material(s)
70548	Magnetic resonance angiography, neck; with contrast material(s)
70549	Magnetic resonance angiography, neck; without contrast material(s), followed by contrast material(s) and further sequences
70551	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, brain (including brain stem); without contrast material
70552	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, brain (including brain stem); with contrast material(s)
70553	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, brain (including brain stem); without contrast material, followed by contrast material(s) and further sequences
70554	Magnetic resonance imaging, brain, functional MRI; including test selection and administration of repetitive body part movement and/or visual stimulation, not requiring physician or psychologist administration
70555	Magnetic resonance imaging, brain, functional MRI; requiring physician or psychologist administration of entire neurofunctional testing

CPT Code	Description
Magnetic Resonance Imaging	
71550	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, chest (e.g., for evaluation of hilar and mediastinal lymphadenopathy); without contrast material(s)
71551	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, chest (e.g., for evaluation of hilar and mediastinal lymphadenopathy); with contrast material(s)
71552	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, chest (e.g., for evaluation of hilar and mediastinal lymphadenopathy); without contrast material(s), followed by contrast material(s) and further sequences
71555	Magnetic resonance angiography, chest (excluding myocardium), with or without contrast material(s)
72141	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, spinal canal and contents, cervical; without contrast material
72142	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, spinal canal and contents, cervical; with contrast material(s)
72146	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, spinal canal and contents, thoracic; without contrast material
72147	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, spinal canal and contents, thoracic; with contrast material(s)
72148	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, spinal canal and contents, lumbar; without contrast material
72149	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, spinal canal and contents, lumbar; with contrast material(s)
72156	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, spinal canal and contents, without contrast material, followed by contrast material(s) and further sequences; cervical
72157	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, spinal canal and contents, without contrast material, followed by contrast material(s) and further sequences; thoracic
72158	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, spinal canal and contents, without contrast material, followed by contrast material(s) and further sequences; lumbar
72159	Magnetic resonance angiography, spinal canal and contents, with or without contrast material(s)
72195	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, pelvis; without contrast material(s)
72196	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, pelvis; with contrast material(s)
72197	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, pelvis; without contrast material(s), followed by contrast material(s) and further sequences
72198	Magnetic resonance angiography, pelvis, with or without contrast material(s)
73218	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, upper extremity, other than joint; without contrast material(s)
73219	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, upper extremity, other than joint; with contrast material(s)
73220	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, upper extremity, other than joint; without contrast material(s), followed by contrast material(s) and further sequences
73221	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, any joint of upper extremity; without contrast material(s)
73222	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, any joint of upper extremity; with contrast material(s)
73223	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, any joint of upper extremity; without contrast material(s), followed by contrast material(s) and further sequences
73225	Magnetic resonance angiography, upper extremity, with or without contrast material(s)
73718	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, lower extremity other than joint; without contrast material(s)
73719	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, lower extremity other than joint; with contrast material(s)
73720	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, lower extremity other than joint; without contrast material(s), followed by contrast material(s) and further sequences

CPT Code	Description
Magnetic Resonance Imaging	
73721	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, any joint of lower extremity; without contrast material
73722	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, any joint of lower extremity; with contrast material(s)
73723	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, any joint of lower extremity; without contrast material(s), followed by contrast material(s) and further sequences
73725	Magnetic resonance angiography, lower extremity, with or without contrast material(s)
74181	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, abdomen; without contrast material(s)
74182	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, abdomen; with contrast material(s)
74183	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, abdomen; without contrast material(s), followed by with contrast material(s) and further sequences
74185	Magnetic resonance angiography, abdomen, with or without contrast material(s)
75557	Cardiac magnetic resonance imaging for morphology and function without contrast material
75559	Cardiac magnetic resonance imaging for morphology and function without contrast material; with stress imaging
75561	Cardiac magnetic resonance imaging for morphology and function without contrast material(s), followed by contrast material(s) and further sequences;
75563	Cardiac magnetic resonance imaging for morphology and function without contrast material(s), followed by contrast material(s) and further sequences; with stress imaging
76390	Magnetic resonance spectroscopy
76498	Unlisted magnetic resonance procedure (e.g., diagnostic, interventional)
77046	Magnetic resonance imaging, breast, without contrast material; unilateral
77047	Magnetic resonance imaging, breast, without contrast material; bilateral
77048	Magnetic resonance imaging, breast, without and with contrast material(s), including computer-aided detection (CAD real-time lesion detection, characterization and pharmacokinetic analysis), when performed; unilateral
77049	Magnetic resonance imaging, breast, without and with contrast material(s), including computer-aided detection (CAD real-time lesion detection, characterization and pharmacokinetic analysis), when performed; bilateral
77084	Magnetic resonance (e.g., proton) imaging, bone marrow blood supply

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HCPCS Code	Description
Magnetic Resonance Imaging	
S8037	Magnetic resonance cholangiopancreatography (MRCP)

Clinical Evidence

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)

ACOG's committee on obstetric practice makes the following recommendations regarding diagnostic imaging procedures during pregnancy and lactation:

- Ultrasonography and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) are not associated with risk and are the imaging techniques of choice for the pregnant patient, but they should be used prudently and only when use is expected to answer a relevant clinical question
- Radiation exposure through radiography, computed tomography (CT) scan, or nuclear medicine imaging techniques is at a dose much lower than the exposure associated with fetal harm
- The use of gadolinium contrast with MRI should be limited; it may be used as a contrast agent only if it significantly improves diagnostic performance and is expected to improve fetal or maternal outcome (ACOG, 2021)

American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA)

The 2015 ASA Practice Advisory on Anesthetic Care for Magnetic Resonance Imaging states that risks related to the patient may include age-related risks, health-related risks, and risks from foreign bodies located in or on the patient or implanted ferromagnetic items.

- Age-related risks apply to neonates or premature infants and the elderly
- Health-related risks include, but are not limited to:
 - Need for intensive or critical care
 - Impaired respiratory function (e.g., tonsillar hypertrophy and sleep apnea)
 - Changes in level of sedation, muscle relaxation, or ventilation
 - Hemodynamic instability and vasoactive infusion requirements
 - Comorbidities that may contribute to adverse MRI effects (e.g., burns or temperature increases in patients with obesity or peripheral vascular disease)
- Foreign bodies include non-medical ferromagnetic items imbedded in the patient (e.g., eyeliner tattoos) or attached to the patient (e.g., pierced jewelry; implanted ferromagnetic items may include items such as aneurysm clips, prosthetic heart valves, or coronary arterial stents)

References

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Committee opinion 723: Guidelines for diagnostic imaging during pregnancy and lactation. VOL. 130, NO. 4. October 2017. Reaffirmed October 2021.

American Society of Anesthesiologists. Practice Advisory on anesthetic care for magnetic resonance imaging. Anesthesiology. V 122; No 3. March 2015.

Policy History/Revision Information

Date	Summary of Changes
01/01/2026	<p>Template Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Created shared policy version to support application to Oxford plan membership <p>Application</p> <p>Individual Exchange</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Added language to indicate this Medical Policy does not apply to the state of Massachusetts <p>Applicable Codes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updated list of applicable CPT codes to reflect annual edits; removed 0042T <p>Supporting Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Archived previous policy versions MP.13.18 and RADIOLOGY 041.12

Instructions for Use

This Medical Policy provides assistance in interpreting UnitedHealthcare standard benefit plans. When deciding coverage, the member specific benefit plan document must be referenced as the terms of the member specific benefit plan may differ from the standard plan. In the event of a conflict, the member specific benefit plan document governs. Before using this policy, check the member specific benefit plan document and any applicable federal or state mandates. UnitedHealthcare reserves the right to modify its Policies and Guidelines as necessary. This Medical Policy is provided for informational purposes. It does not constitute medical advice.

This Medical Policy may also be applied to Medicare Advantage plans in certain instances. In the absence of a Medicare National Coverage Determination (NCD), Local Coverage Determination (LCD), or other Medicare coverage guidance, CMS allows a Medicare Advantage Organization (MAO) to create its own coverage determinations, using objective evidence-based rationale relying on authoritative evidence ([Medicare IOM Pub. No. 100-16, Ch. 4, §90.5](#)).

UnitedHealthcare may also use tools developed by third parties, such as the InterQual[®] criteria, to assist us in administering health benefits. UnitedHealthcare Medical Policies are intended to be used in connection with the independent professional medical judgment of a qualified health care provider and do not constitute the practice of medicine or medical advice.