



Common questions about Specialist Management Solutions (SMS)



Here you can find answers to several commonly asked questions about Specialist Management Solutions (SMS) and how it relates to Centers of Excellence (COEs). If you would like more information, please reach out to an SMS Advocate or nurse at **1-800-379-6898**.

What are the orthopedic Centers of Excellence (COEs)?

Orthopedic COEs are a network of facilities and surgeons who meet volume and quality criteria and provide orthopedic surgical care with fewer complications and at a lower cost to members than many non-COE providers.

What is SMS?

SMS is a comprehensive program designed to support your orthopedic care needs. If you're experiencing bone, joint, ligament, tendon or muscle pain, SMS Advocates or nurses can assist you in various ways. They can help schedule educational consults with local musculoskeletal specialists, serve as a single point of contact throughout your care journey and provide guidance on other programs within your health plan benefits. SMS is available through your health plan at no additional cost.

How can I get started with SMS?

Contact an SMS Advocate or nurse to learn more about a specific diagnosis, ways to manage musculoskeletal pain and understand treatment options to then discuss with your treatment provider. Work with them to locate an in-network provider so you can determine the site of care for your musculoskeletal care needs. They can also remain in touch throughout the health journey — from the first call, all the way through recovery, if needed.



Call 1-800-379-6898

to speak with an SMS Advocate or nurse, if you have questions or would like to learn more about our COE providers.

United
Healthcare

Why have I received information about SMS and the COE facilities?

All UnitedHealthcare subscribers are eligible to receive orthopedic care from COE providers. UnitedHealthcare would like members to be aware of the SMS program in their care journey so an SMS Advocate or nurse can help them manage their condition.

Do I have to enroll in SMS?

SMS is usually a voluntary program. You're encouraged to enroll if you are experiencing orthopedic pain or have a question about your condition. Some employers require members to enroll in SMS if they are having spinal surgery, knee/hip replacement or other major orthopedic surgery. If you're not sure, contact SMS to speak with an Advocate or nurse. Call **1-800-379-6898** to speak with an SMS Advocate or nurse if you have questions or would like to learn more about our COE providers.

What happens if I do not enroll in SMS?

If you're planning knee or hip replacement or spine surgery and your employer requires you to enroll in SMS, you may not receive your surgical authorization until you have enrolled in SMS and met with a registered nurse.

Do I have to use a Center of Excellence (COE)?

Typically, the use of a COE is voluntary. However, some employers require that if you live within a certain distance of a COE, you must use one to receive coverage for your surgery. If you are not sure of your employer's requirements, please contact SMS to speak with an Advocate or nurse.

How can I find the closest COE for me?

The easiest way to find a COE facility and surgeon is to enroll in the SMS program and speak with a registered nurse as soon as you're considering surgery.

Will I need to change providers?

You may need to change providers if you're required to use a COE and you have selected a non-Center of Excellence provider.

Do I have to enroll in SMS if I am NOT planning surgery?

No, you do not need to enroll in SMS if you are not planning surgery. However, the SMS Advocate or nurse are available to help you at any time if you are having joint pain or have questions about your orthopedic condition. Please contact an SMS Advocate or nurse at **1-800-379-6898** if you have further questions or would like to schedule a procedure with a COE.

Learn more

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This program should not be used for emergency or urgent care needs. In an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. The information provided through the nurse support service is for informational purposes only and provided as part of your health plan. The nurse cannot diagnose problems or recommend treatment and is not a substitute for your doctor's care. Your health information is kept confidential in accordance with the law. This nurse support service is not an insurance program and may be discontinued at any time. The Centers of Excellence (COE) program providers and medical centers are independent contractors who render care and treatment to health plan members. The COE program does not provide direct healthcare services or practice medicine, and the COE providers and medical centers are solely responsible for medical judgments and related treatments. The COE program is not liable for any act or omission, including negligence, committed by any independent contracted healthcare professional or medical center.

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