

Provider E-News

Provider Services Department



June 2025

Business Updates

Use Our New Smartsheet Auto-Reply Messenger (SAM) Inquiry Tool for Fastest Response to Your Questions

We are excited to announce that we have developed a tool to answer the most frequently asked questions that we currently receive via our Provider Services email inbox. The [Smartsheet Autoreply Messenger \(SAM\)](#) is a Smartsheet-driven tool that will automatically generate a reply to your questions, allowing for an immediate response time, consistent messaging and increased provider satisfaction. Note that SAM is not an AI-based tool; it is an automatic email reply containing the requested information and links

to our provider site that address the most common questions we receive. This is the same information our Provider Services team has been sending manually in their individual, one-by-one email replies. This new tool means your inquiry no longer waits in an email queue.

Effective today, we ask that you please use SAM to submit any inquiries you would otherwise submit to Provider Services via email. While our Provider Services email will still be active during the transition period, we plan to discontinue its use in coming months as we transition to this new service.

Please be assured that Provider Services staff are still monitoring these requests and will ensure that you receive the support you need. If your question isn't listed as an option in the SAM form, you can choose "I need help with something not listed" and send your question via free-form text. However, we encourage you to go through the drop-down menu to ensure the option isn't available before using the free-form entry option, as we have worked diligently to create a comprehensive list of questions and answers that will automatically generate an answer for you right away.

We will continue to add to our support database of answers as we go forward, and we appreciate your patience as we make the transition to this responsive tool to better support your needs.

Care Connectors - Wellness Visit innovation for Medicare members



As part of Kaiser Permanente's efforts to improve patient care and learn if there are opportunities to serve patients in a way that adds value and convenience while maintaining care coordination, we have contracted with Care Connectors Medical Group to perform in-home and telehealth Annual Wellness Visits for certain internal and network-bonded Medicare Advantage members from August into December 2025.

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Eligible patients will be outreached and offered an opportunity to schedule an Annual Wellness Visit as part of this pilot project. During the visit, a nurse practitioner will perform health assessments, including fall risk, depression screening, medication review and an overview of chronic conditions, among other evaluations.

Providers will be notified of visits your patients have with Care Connectors via a post-visit summary that will be faxed directly to the provider's office following the visit. Additional visit information will also be made available in Affiliate Link/Care Everywhere to ensure full transparency. If, during the visit, it's determined the patient has urgent follow-up care needs (e.g., medication refills, lab orders, additional testing, social/behavioral health needs, etc.), the Care Connector healthcare provider will contact your office directly to coordinate next steps.

For additional information about this outreach, please contact Care Connectors Medical Group at 253-652-2131.



[Mental health & wellness provider network support transitioning back to Kaiser Permanente](#)

Effective June 30, 2025, all network services previously handled by Magellan Healthcare, including credentialing, updating provider practice data, and appointment scheduling support, will now be managed directly by Kaiser Permanente. **This change does not affect your contract with Kaiser Permanente.** Please refer to the [Magellan Transition FAQ](#) for more details.

Clinical Updates



Promoting Safer Use of Benzodiazepines

Kaiser Permanente Washington is committed to promoting safer use of benzodiazepines. Research increasingly shows serious risks of harm for patients on chronic benzodiazepine therapy. Benzodiazepines increase the risk of addiction, withdrawal, cognitive decline, motor vehicle crashes, and hip fracture. Please be aware that benzodiazepine safety letters are being sent out to Kaiser

Permanente Washington members in July 2025. This letter will encourage patients to discuss alternatives to benzodiazepines with their provider.

Exclusions from this letter distribution include members in hospice or palliative care, cancer diagnosis, younger than 18 years of age, seizure/epilepsy indication, or residents of long-term care facilities.

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Enhancing Safety: Prior Authorization Criteria for Zolpidem 10 mg

Impact on Healthcare Providers

- Effective July 1, 2025, prior authorization will be required to fill new prescriptions for zolpidem 10 mg tablets.
- This will not impact patients who are already established on zolpidem 10 mg tablets.

Introduction

- Per the FDA, the 10 mg immediate release zolpidem dose may be used in non-elderly men and women if needed but is more likely to impair next-morning driving and other activities requiring full alertness.
- There is no evidence to support the long-term use of these drugs for insomnia. Kaiser Permanente recognizes the first-line treatment of insomnia as cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I) and sleep hygiene.

Background

- Zolpidem, a nonbenzodiazepine (Z-drug), is indicated for treatment of insomnia.
- While treatment guidelines recommend short-term use of z-drugs, up to one-third of use is long term.
- Z-drugs are not recommended for long-term use due to the risks of physical and psychological dependence, tolerance, potential for severe withdrawal symptoms, potential for rebound insomnia, and persistent adverse side effects.
- Zolpidem is cleared from the body at a slower rate in women than in men.

Prior Authorization Criteria

- Prescribers will need to attest that patient meets **ALL** the following criteria:
 - Trial and Failure of Zolpidem 5 mg:
 - Patient has tried and failed therapy with zolpidem 5 mg.
 - Optimized Sleep Hygiene and Reduced Behavioral and Environmental Factors:
 - Potential causes of sleep disturbances are being actively managed (e.g., improving sleep hygiene, minimize alcohol use).
 - No Recent Falls:
 - Patient has not experienced any falls in the past year.
 - Offered Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT-I):
 - Patient has been offered CBT-I treatment (including virtual or app) within the last 5 years.
 - No Complex Sleep Behaviors:
 - Patient does not have a history of complex sleep behaviors (e.g., sleepwalking, sleep driving, and engaging in other activities while not fully awake) related to benzodiazepines or Z-drugs.

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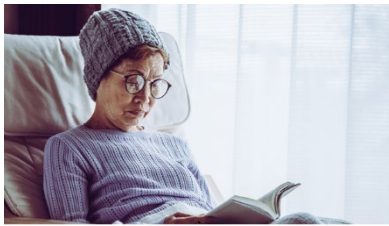
Conclusion

Promoting safe use of z-drugs remains an ongoing priority in avoiding prescription medications that place a patient at higher risk of morbidity and mortality and reduce the number of patients at risk of becoming newly dependent, tolerant, or addicted to z-drugs.

References

- [Benzodiazepine and Z-Drug Safety Guideline | Kaiser Permanente Washington](#)
- [Insomnia Guideline | Kaiser Permanente Washington](#)

Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute News



[Study links sitting for longer stretches to risk of blood clots in older women](#)

New research suggests that older women who sit for longer periods during the day have an increased risk of developing venous thromboembolism (VTE), a potentially serious condition in which a blood clot forms in a vein. Taking more breaks from sitting could potentially lower the risk.



[LHS E-STAR training program selects 3 new scholars](#)

The Washington Learning Health System Embedded Scientist Training and Research ([LHS E-STAR](#)) Center is excited to announce 3 new scholars: [Kaboni Gondwe, PhD, RN](#); [Lily Shapiro, PhD](#); and [Mayuree Rao, MD, MS](#). These scholars will partner with leaders from Kaiser Permanente Washington and Veterans Affairs (VA) Puget Sound Health Care System to conduct research aimed at transforming primary care.

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Provider Notices



Notices can be viewed on our [Provider Notices](#) page on the [Kaiser Permanente provider site](#). Please check our provider site on a regular basis for provider manual changes and updates.

We communicate changes to the [Provider Manual](#) in the [Provider eNews](#) for your convenience. However, it is your responsibility to remain updated on any changes by visiting our site regularly for updates on our policies and procedures.

- [Medicare Part B drugs requiring prior authorization](#)
- [Medicare Part B drugs requiring step therapy](#)
- [Addition of quantity limits for ustekinumab biosimilars](#)
- [Fam-trastuzumab \(Enhertu\) and Ado-trastuzumab emtansine \(Kadcyla\) updated prior authorization criteria](#)
- [Oncology products updated prior authorization criteria](#)
- [Changes to medical necessity review criteria for Thyroid Surgeries](#)
- [Changes to medical necessity review criteria for Excimer Laser Treatments](#)
- [Changes to medical necessity review criteria for Shoulder MRI](#)
- [Changes to medical necessity review criteria for Electromagnetic Navigation-guided Bronchoscopy](#)
- [Changes to medical necessity review criteria for Wireless Motility Capsule](#)
- [Updated prior authorization criteria for Ustekinumab \(Stelara\)](#)
- [Updated prior authorization criteria for Trastuzumab \(Herceptin\)](#)
- [Changes to medical necessity review criteria for gender affirming surgery](#)
- [Changes to medical necessity review criteria for high-frequency chest wall oscillation](#)
- [Changes to medical necessity review criteria for tumor treatment field therapy](#)
- [Hearing aid services](#)
- [2025 annual provider notice for Kaiser Permanente NCQA accreditation](#)
- [Mental health & wellness provider network support transitioning back to Kaiser Permanente](#)

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EFT Deposit & Check Mailing Dates



2025 EFT Deposit & Check Mail Dates

Provider reimbursement checks are scheduled to be deposited ACH or mailed on the following dates. Mailed checks should arrive within approximately 3 business days.

January 9, 16, 24, 30

July 8, 10, 17, 24, 31

February 6, 13, 21, 27

August 7, 14, 21, 28

March 6, 13, 20, 27

September 5, 11, 18, 25

April 5, 10, 17, 24

October 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

May 3, 8, 15, 22, 30

November 6, 13, 20, 28

June 5, 12, 19, 26

December 4, 11, 18, 26

Kaiser Permanente Holidays

New Year's Day
Monday, January 1

Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Monday, January 20

Presidents' Day
Monday, February 17

Memorial Day
Monday, May 26

Independence Day
Thursday, July 4

Labor Day
Monday, September 1

Thanksgiving
Thursday, November 27

Christmas
Wednesday, December 25

Provider Resources



Submit a [Provider Update Form](#) to inform us of changes to your practice.



View our [Provider Directory](#).



Learn more about our [Specialty Services](#).



Read our latest [Formulary Decision Highlights](#).



View our 7 formularies on our [Formulary](#) page or [ePocrates](#).



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