

**BULLETIN NUMBER:** 17-2019  
**TITLE:** ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY  
**DATE:** April 1, 2019

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**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this bulletin is to clarify coverage for Chronic Orthopedic condition (COC) and pain management under the Plan. Not all benefits that are determined to be medically necessary will be covered benefits under the NHI schedule of benefit. This bulletin further explains coverage for Orthopedic Surgery and other related pain management offered at an off-island approved hospital facility and local providers in Palau.

**BACKGROUND:**

Chronic orthopedic problem is one of the leading cases approved for referral outside of the Palau. Orthopedic conditions can be defined as acute or chronic. Acute orthopedic condition often affects one part of musculoskeletal system and often respond to treatments. A chronic orthopedic condition usually affects multiple parts of our musculoskeletal system and not fully responsive to treatment and in most cases persist for an extended period.

**DEFINITION:**

Orthopedics is branch of medicine concerned with conditions involving musculoskeletal system consists of the body's bones, muscles, tendons, ligaments and nerves.

Acute Chronic Condition in medicine is described as short in duration, the general definition of an acute condition is one that is expected to be brief and expected to resolve in a short amount of time.

Chronic Condition is condition or illness that is persistent or otherwise long-lasting in its effect that comes with time and age.

**INTERPRETATION:****OFF-ISLAND REFERRAL & LOCAL CARE**

- Maximum coverage under NHI plan for a Chronic Orthopedic condition (COC) and other COC pain related management services/drugs is five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00). Oral medication that includes those that can be taken by mouth such as nonsteroidal anti-

inflammatory drugs and opioids maybe covered based on the general health and profile of the member.

- Maximum coverage under NHI plan for Acute Orthopedic condition or orthopedic problems as a result of an accident or injury maybe be covered up to thirty-five thousand dollars (\$35,000). Acute Orthopedic condition as a result of an accident or injury within a period of three (3) months may be also be covered up to the maximum NHI annual coverage.
- Services provided to member to validate the presence of Chronic Orthopedic condition such as diagnostic test, specialty visits, or post op rehabilitation shall be payable under MSA.
- Types of orthopedic procedures includes but not limited to total knee replacement (TKR), total hip replacement (THR), hand surgery, shoulder and elbow surgery, total joint reconstruction, skull reconstruction, foot and ankle surgery, orthopedic trauma, repair of ankle fracture, repair of rotator cuff tendon, carpal tunnel release, and removal of support implant.
- Orthopedic surgery coverage will be determined by the plan based on local capacity and available facility in Palau to provide the service. The plan reserves the right to deny coverage for an off-island referral if care can be adequately provided in Palau.

Chronic Orthopedic Conditions \$5,000 coverage maximum includes but not limited to:

- Injections, surgical interventions
- Implants (rods, pins, screw, etc.)
- Cast, Unna boot, splints
- Prosthetic Devices

*Exclusions: Foot orthotics, orthopedic shoes or footwear or support items used for illness affecting the lower limbs, such as diabetes are excluded under the Plan.*

*Surgical treatment of flat feet; subluxation of the foot; weak, strained, unstable feet, tarsalgia, metatarsalgia, hyperkeratosis are not covered under the Plan.*