

Most health insurance companies have established guidelines that patients need to follow in order to be pre-authorized for weight loss surgery. My goal is to work with you and help you fulfill those requirements so that you can proceed with your weight loss surgery. Here are a few things you can do to help me in this process.

1. Contact your insurance company before coming to your initial appointment with Dr Ali or Dr Arreola and make sure weight loss surgery is not **EXCLUDED** from your plan.
2. Please understand that we have a very large number of patients undergoing the work-up before weight loss surgery. Once you start your work-up, keep track of what you have completed and what is pending. At the time of your initial visit, you will receive a folder with a lot of information about weight loss surgery. One of the items in the folder is a **list of appointments and tests that need to be completed before your surgery**. Use that list as a guide and check everything off as it is completed. Please keep that list in front of you when you call me to find out the status of your pre-authorization.
3. The step that delays your weight loss surgery most frequently is the requirement by insurance companies that you try to lose weight under the supervision of a physician before proceeding with weight loss surgery. **Most insurance companies require you to have WEIGHT LOSS SPECIFIC APPOINTMENTS with your PCP for this purpose**. Most plans require 6 visits, one visit per month (a few require 3 visits).
4. Please call your insurance company to find out if they require you to do that. If your insurance company requires it, there is no way around it. I recommend that you discuss this issue with your PCP and start the process of diet and exercise documentation as soon as possible. You can do that even before your first appointment with Dr Ali or Dr Arreola. Again the folder you will receive at the time of your first appointment has a template that your PCP can fill out at the time of every visit. **If you lose that template or need extra copies of it, you can download them from the “Resources” page of this site.**
 - a. Based on my experience dealing with insurance companies, I have found out that the PCP notes are most helpful when they cover the following issues at every visit,
 - b. Notation of your current diet program,
 - c. Notation of your current exercise program (what type of exercise, how many times a week, and for how long),
 - d. Notation of your PCP recommendations on your diet AND exercise programs.
5. **Pennsylvania Medical Assistance** also requires patients to keep a daily food and exercise log for three months before preauthorizing weight loss surgery.

6. When you are close to completing your workup, and only one or two items are pending, you can notify me and I can start the paper work to submit your case to your health insurance for pre-authorization
7. Once you have been submitted to the insurance company, they can take up to 30 days to review your case.
8. I will contact you as soon as I hear from them and we will move forward from there
9. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. If you have email access, please email me at Jennifer.washburn@hamot.org with your questions and concerns. It is more efficient for me and I can spend more time on processing your paperwork. If you do not have email access, you can leave a message at my voice mail 814-877-6989. Please understand that it could take me 2 to 3 business days to return your calls.

I look forward to working with you to help obtain pre-authorization for your weight loss surgery and wish you a lot of good luck with your long term weight loss plans.

Jennifer Washburn