

UCSF Doctors Joining Hill Physicians – San Francisco

Effective January 1, 2010, all the primary care and specialist physicians in UCSF Medical Group will be joining Hill Physicians Medical Group – San Francisco. The relationship with Hill Physicians means that, for many people with HMO coverage, the easiest access to the world-class specialists of UCSF will be through primary care doctors in San Francisco or Daly City who are affiliated with Hill Physicians.

This transition affects members in San Francisco and Daly City who have HMO or POS plans through Aetna, Anthem Blue Cross (California Care), Blue Shield, CIGNA, Health Net and PacifiCare by United Healthcare. Kaiser HMO and members with PPO plans are not affected.

Some patients may remain with a Brown & Toland primary care provider, but access to UCSF specialists will be in accordance with Brown & Toland's administrative review and authorization procedures. Other patients may be exempt from the transition or authorization processes because of continuity-of-care exceptions or because they come to UCSF for pediatric specialty or obstetric care.

If you are not exempt from the transition, call your health plan and request to become a "Hill Physicians – San Francisco" member so that you maintain the easiest access to UCSF.

Frequently Asked Questions

Here are some frequently asked questions about this change.

What do I do if my primary care doctor is with UCSF Medical Group?

If your primary care physician is part of UCSF Medical Group, then you can stay with that primary care physician. Most plans will automatically transfer you. However, if your HMO coverage is through Anthem Blue Cross or PacifiCare/United Healthcare, you should call your plan and tell them you want to switch to Hill Physicians – San Francisco. You also will need to request your existing physician and tell them that you are an existing patient of that physician in order to be successfully transferred.

I have a community-based doctor. How do I know what medical group he or she belongs to?

Look at the insurance card from your HMO. It lists the name of your primary care physician and a medical group. If you don't see "Hill Physicians – San Francisco" listed on your new card for 2010, then contact your health plan to make the switch. They will update their records and issue you a new card. There's no interruption in your insurance coverage or change in your cost as a result of switching.

My doctor is with Hill Physicians and B&T, what should I do?

Some doctors are members of several medical groups. This means you can remain with that doctor, but you should still switch your medical group designation so that you have open access to UCSF in all scenarios in 2010 and beyond. Call your health plan to request that your medical group designation switch to Hill Physicians – San Francisco.

Can't I just switch medical groups later on if I become sick and want access to a UCSF specialist?

Although you can switch medical groups at any time, it may take several weeks for the change to take effect. You will then need to choose and see a new primary care physician. Then, after consultation with your new primary care physician, a referral to a UCSF specialist may be scheduled. That's why we encourage you to proactively take action as soon as possible so you do not experience any delays in access to UCSF.

Will this change in any way effect the cost of my medical care or my out-of-pocket expense?

If you stay with your current HMO plan, your payroll contribution and co-pays will not vary depending on what medical group you join.

My child gets care from a pediatrician at California Pacific Medical Center (CPMC) and I get care from a doctor at UCSF Medical Center. Can we continue to receive care at both places?

Most HMOs allow you to choose different medical groups for different members of your family. In this example, you could choose a UCSF or an other Hill primary care physician for yourself while choosing a CPMC-affiliated (primary care) pediatrician in Brown & Toland for your child.

Could I access UCSF doctors more easily if I switch from an HMO to a PPO (preferred provider organization)?

Switches among types of insurance (HMO versus PPO, for example) can only be made during open enrollment, if you obtain coverage through an employer-sponsored benefits package.

It's worth noting that PPO insurance may require a larger employee payroll contribution or have higher co-pays or a higher annual deductible than a HMO plan. PPO coverage may result in higher out-of-pocket expenses if you require extensive treatment. However, UCSF does have contracts with most PPOs so you could access UCSF through PPO coverage.

I have HMO coverage, how do I contact my health plan?

The back of your insurance card should list a phone number for assistance. You also can use these numbers to reach your plan to find out if you meet continuity-of-care provisions, to request that your medical group designation be changed to Hill Physicians - SF or to find a Hill Physicians primary care provider, if needed.

Aetna
(800)756-7039, toll free

Anthem Blue Cross
(800) 333-0912, toll free

Blue Shield
(888) 568-3560, toll free

CIGNA
(800) 244-6224, toll free

Health Net
(800) 638-3889, toll free

PacifiCare by United Healthcare
(800) 624-8822, toll free

For Patients with Specific Questions:**What are the continuity-of-care provisions?**

Patient safety is the top priority to Hill Physicians, UCSF and Brown & Toland. Patients who meet other continuity-of-care guidelines at the time of the January 1, 2010 transition will continue to have access to UCSF specialists regardless of medical group affiliation. Generally, patients with the following circumstances can continue their care for a period of time with the specialist they are seeing now:

- A serious chronic condition - for up to 12 months;
- Terminal illness - through completion of treatment;
- Pregnancy - through birth;
- Scheduled ambulatory surgery (within 180 days of 1/1/2010) - through surgery; and
- Very young children (up to 36 months) – for up to 12 months.

If you have a question about whether you are included in continuity-of-care provisions, consult your health plan.

What about the referral agreement between Brown & Toland and UCSF?

UCSF negotiated a referral agreement with Brown & Toland Medical Group that covers certain HMO patients for a two-year period beginning Jan. 1, 2010. Except as noted below, referrals from Brown & Toland primary care physicians will require prior authorization to access UCSF specialty care.

Exceptions are pediatric specialty and obstetrical care, patients covered under state-defined continuity of care provisions (described above), and patients who saw a UCSF specialist for care from July 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009 *and* require continuing care in 2010. Those patients may see a UCSF specialist without prior authorization.

What happens if someone is in the hospital when the transition occurs?

Care in the hospital will continue to be handled by UCSF specialists. If you selected a Hill Physicians primary care doctor recently, during open enrollment for example, that Hill doctor will be your primary care physician upon discharge. The only exception is for members of PacifiCare who will be required to stay with the primary care doctor of record at the time of admission until the first of the month after discharge.

If you did not change to a Hill primary care doctor during open enrollment (taking effect 1/1/2010), then your primary care physician remains your previous physician. Follow-up access to UCSF is then governed by continuity-of-care and/or specific exceptions for pediatric and obstetric care.

What is the difference between a referral and an authorization?

A referral is made from one doctor to another, usually from your primary care physician to a specialist. It is for the purpose of an evaluation by the specialist. That specialist may then recommend certain treatments or services, which may require an authorization. Your physicians will handle the referrals and authorization processes. If you have existing referral and authorizations to non-UCSF, non-Hill providers, please see the additional details below.

I have a UCSF PCP and an existing referral to a non-UCSF, non-Hill specialist. What happens to that?

In the case of referrals for consultation or office visits to non-participating specialists, those patients must receive a new referral from their Hill primary care physician after January 1, 2010. Your primary care doctor will work with you to select from among many UCSF or community-based specialists. Call your doctor's office for more information.

I have a UCSF PCP and an authorization for services with a non-UCSF, non-Hill specialist. What happens to that?

If a new Hill Physicians member has a Brown & Toland authorization for treatment at the time of the transfer (1/1/2010), Hill Physicians will honor the authorization for treatment with the selected specialist. When that authorization reaches its expiration date (as noted on the authorization form), then any subsequent authorizations would be reviewed by our standard policies.

I have seen a UCSF specialist but do not have an open authorization at this time. How can I make sure I can continue to see that specialist later?

If your primary care doctor is with Hill Physicians – San Francisco, then your access to UCSF specialists in 2010 and beyond continues without need for administrative review or approvals, in most cases. If your primary care doctor is with Brown & Toland, then your access to UCSF specialists will change unless you meet continuity-of-care guidelines, unless you saw a UCSF specialist between July 1, 2009 and December 31, 2009 and require a follow-up appointment, or unless you are seeking specialty pediatric or obstetrical care.

Only you can decide if you prefer to remain with a B&T doctor, or would prefer to switch to a different primary care doctor for easy access to UCSF specialists. The choice is yours.

How can I get more information about this new partnership between UCSF and Hill Physicians in San Francisco?

UCSF is pleased to participate in Hill Physicians, the largest Medical Group of independent physicians in Northern California. As part of Hill Physicians, we are enhancing our service, including a new Patient Portal with e mail access and clinical lab results reporting. For more information, see www.accessUCSF.org. For information about Hill Physicians Medical Group, visit www.HillPhysicians.com.

For customer service contact:

- Hill Physicians Medical Group
(800) 445-5747
Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- UCSF
(888) 689-UCSF
Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.