



Blue Distinction + A New Quality Program

Frequently Asked Questions for SISC members
needing hip surgery, knee surgery, and spine surgery



Effective October 1, 2015 SISC California members must use a Blue Cross Blue Shield Association (BCBSA) Blue Distinction+ designated Center (hospital) for certain inpatient orthopedic surgeries like hip replacements, knee replacements, and specific spine surgeries in order to be covered by the SISC plan. Here are some frequently asked questions about the new program that can help you if you're planning on having any of these surgeries.

What is a Blue Distinction+ Hospital?

The Blue Cross Blue Shield Association (BCBSA) has developed a national network of high-quality facilities that demonstrate expertise in delivering and meeting quality specialty care safely and effectively; this program is called the Blue Distinction+ hospital network.

The Blue Distinction+ hospitals are Centers of Excellence that have been carefully selected by the National Blue Cross Blue Shield Association using input from the medical community. Additionally, after the quality selection was made, there was a further refining of the hospitals based on cost. The Blue Distinction+ hospitals represent quality and reasonable cost.

Each of the hospitals designated Blue Distinction+ for orthopedic care has been evaluated based on:

- The expertise of the medical team
- The number of times the surgery has been performed at the hospital
- The hospital's track record for procedure results
- Cost of care

When you and family members use a Blue Distinction+ hospital for hip replacements, knee replacements, and specific spine surgeries, you will get PPO in-network coverage.

Am I required to use a Blue Distinction+ hospital for hip, knee, and certain spine surgeries?

Yes, effective October 1, 2015, SISC California members must use a BCBS Blue Distinction+ Hospital for non-emergency inpatient hip, knee, and spine surgeries (listed below) to get your bills paid by your PPO plan. If you do not get your surgery at a Blue Distinction+ Center, your SISC plan will not pay for the hospital stay related to the surgery.

Surgery name	Inpatient codes (ICD-09 procedure codes)
Total hip replacement	81.51
Revision hip replacement	00.70-00.73 81.53
Total knee replacement	00.85
Revision knee replacement	00.80-00.84 81.55
Discectomy	80.51
Decompression (without fusion)	03.09
Primary fusion	81.00-81.08
Revision fusion	81.30-81.39

Note: This requirement does not apply to emergencies. ICD-10 Coding may apply.



How can I get a list of the hospitals in California that have the Blue Distinction+ program?

You can find the most up-to-date listing at provider.bcbs.com.

Here are the instructions:

- The SISC member must put in the three letter (SIF) prefix from their ID card in the box that says **Already A Member**.
- Enter “hospital” in the **Search by** box.
- You can either choose to search within a selected radius by entering your city and state or ZIP code, or you can select **no radius** to get the entire state and enter “California”.
- Choose **Add filter**.
- Select the plus sign next to Blue Distinction.
- Choose the box next to Blue Distinction Centers+ for Hip and Knee Replacement or Spine Surgery.
Important: make sure you select only Blue Distinction+ facilities, not Blue Distinction.
- A list will come up for the area you searched or for all of California if you selected **no radius**.
- You can choose **Create directory** at the bottom of the page and get a PDF list of all the search results.

Below is a screen shot of the page, filled out correctly as described above, that will result in a listing for all of California for Blue Distinction Centers+ for Hip and Knee. You can use the same method for Spine Centers, but you must change the filter to select Blue Distinction+ Centers for Spine Surgery. Please remember to enter your ZIP code and a mile radius for facilities near you.

The screenshot shows the 'National Doctor and Hospital Finder' website. The browser address bar shows 'provider.bcbs.com'. The page title is 'National Doctor and Hospital Finder'. The search interface is titled 'Find a Doctor or Hospital' and includes the following fields and options:

- Search by:** Keyword | [Search by Specialty](#)
- Already A Member:** SIF (input field) OR **Choose Your Network:** Select a Network (dropdown menu)
- Search by:** Hospital (input field)
- Location:** No Radius (dropdown menu) | e.g. 123 Main Street OR Dallas, TX OR 76210 (input field) | GO (button)
- Filters:** Patient Ratings, Extended Hours, Recognitions, Affiliations, Accepting New Patients, Gender, Languages Spoken, Blue Distinction, Blue Distinction Centers+ for Knee and Hip Replacement, Quality Measures.

On the right side of the page, there are two promotional banners:

- TO SEE SEARCH RESULTS FOR YOUR COVERAGE:** Already A Member. First 3 letters (input field) XYZ. Enter the first 3 letters of your Member ID.
- SHOPPING FOR YOUR OWN HEALTH INSURANCE, NOT THROUGH YOUR EMPLOYER?** Visit your local Blue Cross Blue Shield Company website to find a doctor or hospital. OR CALL 1.888.620.BLUE

Anthem Customer Service is ready to help. You can call the Customer Service number on the back of your ID card and a representative will help you find a hospital, find a surgeon, or help you contact the travel company, Healthbase.

What if I live outside of California?

The list of Blue Distinction+ providers at provider.bcbs.com includes hospitals all around the U.S. so that you can receive care no matter where you live.

How can I find a surgeon who practices at the Blue Distinction+ hospital?

Ask your primary care doctor to refer you to a surgeon who performs surgeries at the Blue Distinction+ hospital in your community.

If there is not a Blue Distinction+ hospital in your community, you can select any Blue Distinction+ hospital in California. If you choose the Blue Distinction+ hospital closest to you, you are more likely to be able to stay within the travel benefits provided by your plan. Once you pick a hospital, you can find a surgeon by asking your primary care doctor for help, or finding a providers at provider.bcbs.com, or by calling Anthem Customer Service number on the back of your ID card.

When will my plan cover travel costs?

If you must go to a Blue Distinction+ hospital that's more than 50 miles away, your SISC plan will help pay for travel costs for you and a companion. The benefits are as follows:

Description	Benefit
Number of companions	The patient and one companion
Total number of trips	Three per procedure
Travel benefit	\$2,000 per trip
Hotel days	One night's stay per pre-op/post-op trip, seven nights maximum per surgery
Hotel charge	\$150 per day
Check in bag fees	One bag for member, one bag for companion for each flight

Who can use the Blue Distinction travel benefit?

Active employees, retirees under age 65 (no Medicare) and people with Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) can use the Blue Distinction+ benefit.

Will I need to make medical and travel plans for myself?

No. Anthem Customer Service Representatives can help you locate a Blue Distinction+ hospital, find surgeons that practice at that hospital and facilitate a contact with Healthbase Inc., a travel vendor that will make the travel arrangements. Call Anthem Customer Service at the number on the back of your SISC/Anthem ID card to get started.

I'm nervous about traveling alone. Can someone travel with me?

Yes. Your benefits cover travel and travel-related charges for you and a travel companion. These costs might include travel to and from the hospital and a hotel. When you pick someone to travel with you, make sure it's someone you trust to help you make medical decisions.

My spouse is covered under a different company's plan, but has my plan listed as secondary coverage. Can he or she use my travel benefit?

No. This travel benefit is only for people who are listed as primary under the SISC health plan.

Can I make my own travel arrangements?

No. Travel coverage is only available through Healthbase Inc., so arrangements must be made through that service.

How do I get care after my surgery?

Your travel benefit includes additional travel for follow up after your surgery. Again, Healthbase can help coordinate everything, including planning for care after surgery. Other follow up care can be done locally with your PPO doctor.

What happens if there are complications during surgery?

If this happens, your recovery might be harder. Doctors and nurses at the hospital will help you so you can start getting better. If a problem happens after you go home, contact an Anthem Customer Service for a referral and a case manager can work with you to set up follow-up care.

Who do I call for additional information?

To learn more, call Customer Service at the number on the back of your ID card. If you need to have a hip or knee replacement or one of the specified spine procedures, a Customer Service Representative can help explain this and other benefits.

