Peak Flu Season Is Almost Here. Get A Flu Shot This Year!

Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat and the lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and sometimes even death. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu shot each year.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates from October 1, 2018 through May 4, 2019 there have been:

- 36,400 to 61,200 flu deaths in the U.S.
- 531,000 to 647,000 flu hospitalizations
- 37.4 million to 42.9 million flu illnesses

October 2019
Health and wellness or prevention information

continued on page 2

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Getting a flu shot will also help protect other members of your community. That includes older people, children and pregnant women. The flu shot protects people of all ages who have health problems like asthma or high blood sugar. These groups of people have the highest chance of coming down with a serious, even life-threatening, illness if they get the flu.

Prepping for the 2019–2020 flu season
There are many strains of the flu and they are changing all the time. The flu vaccine (shot) is reviewed by researchers each year and updated to match which flu strains they believe will be the most common during the next flu season.

You can get the shot from your doctor, retail clinics or drugstore at low or no cost. After getting a flu shot, you may have redness, pain or swelling at the injection site, low-grade fever, headache or muscle aches. All can be treated by an over-the-counter pain reliever.

Everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs
• Stay away from people who are sick.
• Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever lowers without the use of fever-reducing drugs.
• Cover your coughs and sneezes.
• Wash your hands with soap and water.
• Get plenty of rest.
• Talk to your doctor if symptoms continue.

It takes about two weeks for the shot to start protecting you. That is why the CDC recommends getting the flu shot by the end of October, before flu season reaches its peak.

To find doctors, retail clinics and drugstores near you, call Member Services at 1-877-860-2837, (TTY/TDD: 711).

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Medicaid Redetermination: Renewing Your Eligibility

What is Redetermination?
A redetermination is a review of eligibility for Medicaid, All Kids, SNAP or cash assistance. Eligibility for Medicaid and All Kids must be reviewed at least once a year. The State must decide whether you still meet the rules to keep receiving benefits. Redetermination is often called ‘rede’ for short. You will get a letter telling you that your redetermination is coming up soon. About two weeks later, you will get one more letter. This will have the redetermination forms you need to fill out and return.

What do I need to do?
The form you get will have the most recent information the State may have in their case records for you or your family members. If any of the information is wrong, you must make the corrections. If anything on the form has changed, such as your income, you should make corrections and attach any proof of changes the form may ask for. The redetermination form will tell you when it is due back and how you can return it. The form must be returned even if you do not have anything to change.

Why is this important to me?
It is very important that you fill out and return your redetermination forms on time. If the forms are not returned on time or if you do not provide information that is asked for, your case will be cancelled. If your case is cancelled, you will no longer get Medicaid benefits, which may cause a delay in your care and your services.

Who do I contact for questions or more information?
If you have questions about Medicaid Redeterminations or need help with the forms, please contact your caseworker. You can visit the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) website at http://www.dhs.state.il.us/ABE for more information. Select ‘Manage My Case’ to submit renewals, report changes and check the status of your benefits. For any further questions, contact your local DHS office.
Finding Out Early Helps Prevent Deaths from Breast Cancer

Finding breast cancer early is the best way to prevent deaths from breast cancer. Getting routine tests is the best way to find breast cancer early.

About one in eight American women will get breast cancer at some point in her life. Breast cancer death rates for women are higher than any cancer except for lung cancer.

Get screened
Mammograms can spot breast cancer early, possibly before it has spread. Talk to your doctor about breast cancer, your risk factors and your family medical history.

Recommendations for women at average breast cancer risk:
- If you are between the ages of 50 and 74, get a mammogram at least every two years.
- If you are age 40 to 49, talk with your doctor about the risks and benefits of having a mammogram.
- Your doctor may do more tests if you have family members with a history of breast, ovarian, tubal or peritoneal cancer. These extra tests can show if this family history will put you at higher risk for breast cancer.

Protect your health
A yearly well-woman exam and routine mammograms are key steps toward good overall health. If you have not scheduled your yearly exam or spoken to your doctor about the right testing plan for you, it is time to schedule an appointment.

Sources: National Cancer Institute; American Cancer Society; U.S. Preventive Services Task Force; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.
Spread the word about steps women can take to spot breast cancer early.
Why is My Blood Pressure Always Higher at the Doctor’s Office?

If your blood pressure is higher when you visit your doctor, you are not alone. Stress is known to raise your blood pressure and many people find going to the doctor very stressful. Hypertension (high blood pressure) at the doctor’s office is often called ‘white coat hypertension.’ It is called that because many times the health care professionals who take your blood pressure wear white coats.

While the increase in your blood pressure is temporary and related to the stress of a doctor’s visit, this means that your blood pressure may be high in other situations you find stressful, and you have a higher chance of developing high blood pressure long term. If you already have high blood pressure, the brief increases in your blood pressure put you at a risk of having more drawbacks that come with it.

So, what can you do? Talk to your doctor about taking your blood pressure at home. When you keep track of your blood pressure at home, this can help your doctor see if your high blood pressure is just related to stress or if it is something that you need to work together to fix.

Source: Mayo Clinic

Stress: The Root of What Ails You?

One restless night after the next. Frequent headaches. An upset stomach that will not go away. They may seem like they are unrelated, and many people cannot find the cause of these health problems. But there may be one main cause: stress.

Things like getting stuck in traffic, missing a flight or burning dinner are surely stressful. They may raise your heart rate, cause you to breathe faster and make your palms sweaty, all normal signs of stress.

Those responses from your body have been honed for decades. It is known as the fight-or-flight response. Those reactions are part of a coping method held over from days long past. Our brains release hormones and trigger changes in our body that help us fight off a threat or run away from it.

But other events may cause what is called chronic stress. Experiencing the loss of a loved one, moving across the country or planning a wedding can cause a different, more drawn-out response in our bodies.

“Being chronically stressed out and not dealing with it in a healthy way is not ideal for the mind or the body,” says Dr. Ben Kurian, a psychiatrist and Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plan behavioral health medical director.

Do you have chronic stress?

Symptoms of chronic stress are varied, making it harder to pin down the true source of the sickness. Some of the physical symptoms are:

- Headache
- Chest pain
- Upset stomach
- Feeling tired
- Sleep problems
- Muscle tension or pain

Even worse, stress hormones can worsen other chronic health problems like high blood sugar and high blood pressure, Kurian says.

Stress can also change your mood, causing anxiety or making you feel overwhelmed, grouchy or sad.

How to cope

One of the first steps to coping with chronic stress is seeing that its effects are all linked and what is causing it. Often, big life events that cause long-term stress, like the death of a loved one, cannot be avoided.

But even if we cannot keep it from happening, we can still handle it better. “How we deal with stress is more important than just avoiding it all together,” Kurian says.

continued on page 5
Stress: The Root of What Ails You?

One of the best ways to limit the effects of stress is to focus on these three things:

- **Get enough sleep.** The CDC recommends that adults get seven or more hours of sleep each night.
- **Eat a balanced diet.** Fruit, veggies and high-fiber foods can help fight the harmful effects of stress.
- **Get routine exercise.** Exercising is not just for heart health, it can boost your mood as well. The CDC recommends that adults get 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate exercise each week.

There are plenty of other ways to ease the symptoms of chronic stress. One survey on stress reported that these are the most popular stress relievers beyond sleeping, eating right and exercising:

- Routinely spending time with family and friends
- Meditating or praying often
- Spending time outside
- Spending time with a pet
- Spending time on a hobby

Seek help

Still, sometimes getting routine sleep, eating right, exercising or other efforts are not enough. If you are trying these healthy coping skills and the stress is still causing harmful mental and physical symptoms, it is a good idea to go in and talk to your doctor, Kurian says.

Primary care doctors are on the front lines of treating depression and anxiety. They can suggest treatment choices or help you get in touch with a psychiatrist or therapist, if needed.

“There are trained professionals whose sole job it is to help you get through it,” Kurian says. “You do not have to suffer alone.”

Take action to reduce the effects of stress.

Look at what is occurring in your life that may cause stress and try these recommended steps to deal with it head-on.

Sources: Mayo Clinic; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine; NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health; Harvard Health Publishing

Where You Go for Care Matters

It is important to know where to go for care when you are sick. If you are not having an emergency, knowing where to go for medical care may save you some time.

When to go to the emergency room (ER)

You should visit the nearest hospital ER or call 911 if you are having any life-threatening or disabling health problem that is a true emergency.

You have choices for where you get non-emergency care. Consider these options instead of going to the ER:

24/7 Nurseline

Registered nurses (RNs) are on call to answer your health questions, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can call the 24/7 Nurseline at 1-888-343-2697, (TTY/TDD: 711)

Your doctor’s office

Your own doctor’s office may be the right place to go for non-emergency care, such as health exams, routine shots, colds, flu and minor injuries. Your doctor knows your health history, the medicine you take, your lifestyle and can decide if you need tests or specialist care. Your doctor can also help you with care for a health issue, such as asthma or high blood sugar.

Retail clinic

When you cannot get to your normal doctor, walk-in clinics—available in many retail stores—can be a great choice for care. Many stores have a physician assistant or nurse practitioner who can help treat ear infections, rashes, minor cuts and scrapes, allergies and colds.

Urgent care center

These facilities can treat you for more serious health issues, such as when you need an X-ray or stitches.
To ask for supportive aids and services, or materials in other formats and languages for free, please call, 1-877-860-2837 TTY/TDD:711.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois:

- Provides free aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us, such as:
  - Qualified sign language interpreters
  - Written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, other formats)
- Provides free language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as:
  - Qualified interpreters
  - Information written in other languages

If you need these services, contact Civil Rights Coordinator.

If you believe that Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois has failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex, you can file a grievance with:

You can file a grievance in person or by mail, fax, or email. If you need help filing a grievance, Civil Rights Coordinator is available to help you.

You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, electronically through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, available at https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf, or by mail or phone at:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 509F, HHH Building
Washington, D.C. 20201

1-800-368-1019, 800-537-7697 (TDD)

English: ATTENTION: If you speak English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call 1-877-860-2837 (TTY/TDD: 711).


العربية (Arabic): 
ملحوظة: إذا كنت تتحدث اذكر اللغة، فإن خدمات المساعدة اللغوية تتوفر لك بالمجان. اتصل برقم 1-877-860-2837 (رقم هاتف الصم والتكلم: 711).

हिंदी (Hindi): ध्यान दें: यदि आप हिंदी बोलते हैं तो आपके लिए मुफ्त में भाषा सहायता सेवाएं उपलब्ध हैं। 1-877-860-2837 (TTY/TDD: 711) पर कॉल करें।


ગુજરાતી (Gujarati): સુચના: જો તમે ગુજરાતી બોલતા હો, તો તમને ભાષા સહાયતા સેવાઓ તમારા માટે ઉપલબ્ધ છે. કોલ કરો 1-877-860-2837 (TTY/TDD: 711).


λ η γ ν i κά (Greek): ΠΡΟΣΩΧΗ: Αν μιλάτε ελληνικά, στη σειρά της μπορείτε να χρησιμοποιήσετε δωρεάν υπηρεσίες γλωσσικής υποστήριξης. Καλέστε το 1-877-860-2837 (TTY/TDD: 711).
LifeTimes
Your guide to health, wellness, and fitness

LifeTimes is published four times a year for Blue Cross Community Health Plans members. It brings you news about your health plan and staying healthy. Each issue has important phone numbers for you to cut out and keep. If you have questions or need help, call Member Services.

Articles in LifeTimes are meant to educate. They are not meant as medical advice. Please check with your doctor for any advice about your health.

Member and Community Events
Check out what is happening near you. You can find BCCHP member and community events on the BCCHP website at www.bcchpil.com. Or you can call us toll free at 1-877-860-2837, (TTY/TDD: 711).

Important Blue Cross Community Health Plans phone numbers (Please have your member ID number ready)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Toll-free Number</th>
<th>TTY/ TDD</th>
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<tr>
<td>1-877-860-2837</td>
<td>711</td>
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Member Services
If you have any questions, please call Member Services.
We are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The call is free.

24/7 Nurseline
1-888-343-2697 711

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