Why You Should Know about Metabolic Syndrome

Metabolic syndrome. It affects one out of every six people in the United States, yet many people have never heard of it. Metabolic syndrome is not a disease, but a group of risk factors that when combined, increase the chances of serious health problems.

Most of the metabolic syndrome risk factors have no symptoms, although a large waistline can be a sign. While there are likely many different causes, the chance of getting metabolic syndrome increases if you are overweight or obese, or don’t get enough exercise.

The five risk factors that make up metabolic syndrome are listed in the above chart. If you have three or more of these factors, you have metabolic syndrome. Your chances of developing heart disease, diabetes and stroke rise with the number of metabolic syndrome risk factors you have.

How Is Metabolic Syndrome Treated?

Talk to your doctor so you can learn about where you stand with metabolic syndrome’s five risk factors. If you have metabolic syndrome, work with your doctor to be sure that you receive any treatment needed to manage your blood sugar, blood pressure, triglycerides and/or cholesterol levels.

Also discuss how to address possible causes of metabolic syndrome that are within your control to change, such as being overweight, having a non-active lifestyle and eating an unhealthy diet. Specific actions that your doctor might recommend include:

- **Reducing your weight** by 7 percent to 10 percent and lowering your body mass index (BMI) to less than 25
- **Following a heart-healthy diet**, including eating a variety of fruits, vegetables and whole grains, as well as foods that are low in sodium
- **Being physically active**

Team up with your doctor and make a long-term effort toward good health. This can help you avoid serious illnesses in the future.

Our HMOs have been awarded an Excellent Accreditation from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). This accreditation level is awarded to plans that demonstrate levels of services and clinical quality that meet or exceed NCQA’s rigorous requirements for consumer protection and quality improvement.
New BCBSIL Web Site: More Help for Your Insurance Needs

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois’ (BCBSIL) Web site redesign makes it easier than ever for you to access a wide variety of educational resources and wellness news. The site focuses on easing the worry often tied with insurance and is written in plain, straightforward words — not confusing industry jargon.

In fact, a recent Forrester Research, Inc. study gave the BCBSIL Web site the highest rating over six other competitors’ sites. Now you can use new tools and resources to help you take care of your health insurance. Also, the Web site’s enhanced navigation, a new site search tool and other new helpful sections make it easy to find what you need. You can:

- Read more health and wellness articles and use the interactive tools to help you get and stay well or cope with an illness.
- Scroll over insurance terms you don’t know and the definition will instantly “pop-up” for you to view.

Our new Web site also gives links to other sites to help you stay well:
- eCards for HealthSM – Free online greeting cards that support small changes toward overall wellness.
- Be Smart. Be Well.® – A newly redesigned wellness site that helps raise awareness of health and safety issues that are largely preventable, such as sexually transmitted disease, traumatic brain injuries and drug safety.
- Facebook and Twitter – Become a fan or follow us to get timely updates and actively take part in wellness discussions.

And, don’t forget about the secure Blue Access® for Members site, where you can still find your personal, customized information 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Log on to:

- View highlights of your HMO benefits
- View and download your recent activity on claims paid by BCBSIL
- Use a variety of customized wellness tools and resources in Personal Health Manager
- Earn Blue PointsSM

Check out our newly designed site today to see how it works for you. Click on [+] Feedback link to tell us what you think!

How Does Your Hospital Rate on Safety?

You can find more facts on how hospitals rate on safety and quality from an organization that aims to help America’s health industry improve health care safety and quality. The Leapfrog Group rates hospitals on the safety, quality and efficiency standards to help patients make wise choices about their health care. Visit the Leapfrog Group online at www.leapfroggroup.org.
Five Patient Safety Tips

Did you know that health care errors are one of the nation’s top causes of death and injury? Medical errors happen when something that was planned as part of health care does not work out or when the wrong plan was used in the first place.

One of the most important ways to avoid medical errors is to be an active member of your health care team. Studies show that patients who are more involved in their care are likely to get better results.

Here are five patient safety tips that may help you receive better care:

1) **Ask all health care workers that you come into direct contact with if they have washed their hands.** A recent study found that if a patient asked, workers washed their hands more often and with more soap.

2) **Make sure your doctor knows about everything you are taking,** including over-the-counter drugs and dietary supplements (such as vitamins and herbs).

3) **When your doctor gives you a prescription,** make sure you can read it. If you can’t, chances are your pharmacist can’t either.

4) **If you have had a test,** don’t assume that no news is good news; **ask about the test results.**

5) **If you were in the hospital and are going home,** **ask your doctor to explain your treatment plan.** Research shows that doctors think patients understand more than they really do about what they should or should not do when they go home.

Spring Is Here: Nip Allergies in the Bud

One of the smart steps you can take to control your asthma is learning the triggers that bring on an attack, especially when the seasons change. People with asthma do not have the same triggers, so it’s important for you to know your own triggers in order to take steps to reduce or remove them from your daily life.

Some common asthma triggers include:
- Exercise
- Allergies (such as pets, pollen and dust mites)
- Cigarette smoke
- Perfume
- Pollution or particles in the air (such as paints, cleaners or sprays)
- Some drugs (such as aspirin or ibuprofen)
- Sulfites (a preservative found in processed foods and wine)
- Viral infections (such as a cold or the flu)

Work with your doctor to find out what you can do to help prevent an asthma attack when you are exposed to your triggers. Taking smart steps each day can help you take charge of your asthma and breathe easier.
To learn more about your HMO rights and responsibilities, visit our Web site at www.bcbsil.com/coverage/group/hmo/ and scroll down to “HMO Members Rights and Responsibilities.” You may also find a summary of your rights and responsibilities in your HMO member handbook.

Get the Most from Your HMO

Your rights as an HMO member are an important part of your care. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois respects and honors your rights. In return, we ask that you know your responsibilities as well.

How To Reach Us: To talk to Member Services, call the toll-free number on the back of your ID card from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. CT weekdays. For information about the HMO Illinois and BlueAdvantage HMO Quality Improvement program, please call 312-653-3465. Be sure to talk about any behavioral health services you receive with your PCP.

Or Visit Us Online at www.bcbsil.com to:
- Search for network physicians, hospitals and medical groups/IPAs using Provider Finder®
- View our drug formulary and prescription drug information
- Review Blue Star® Medical Group/IPA and Hospital Reports
- Read our privacy statement

Log on to Blue Access® for Members to:
- See your HMO Benefit Highlights
- Download forms
- Request a new ID card or print out a temporary ID card
- Change your medical group/IPA
- Find wellness information and use the Personal Health Manager tool
- Complete a Health Risk Assessment
- Check your BluePoints™ account

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