Medication Safety

Do you know how to prevent dangerous interactions?

Many people take multiple medications regularly. Sometimes, an interaction between drugs can cause unwanted effects.

How can you prevent these interactions:

• Keep all your healthcare providers up-to-date on all medications you take.

• Provide an up-to-date medication list to both your doctor and pharmacist.

• Many prescription medications can also interact with over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbals, or supplements you may be taking. Include all of these medicines on your list.

• If you experience possible side effects from your medications, contact your doctor or pharmacist. You might do better on a different dose or medication, or even by taking your medication at a different time of day.

• Speak with your pharmacist on how to best take your medications, since some medications may need to be taken at different times of day or in regards to meals. Your pharmacist can help create a schedule that works best for you. 😊
Always Someone to Turn to

Call one of our nurses today.

There is always someone to turn to, whatever time of day or night a health concern arises. The nurse information line provides members with access to a nurse 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and has been a feature of The Health Plan since 1994.

You can speak with a registered nurse if you have concerns about a particular issue, need assistance accessing services, or help getting urgent/emergency care out of the area.

The Nurse Information Line is not meant to replace any services offered by our healthcare providers including after-hours assistance.

Call the Nurse Information Line at 304.639.8597, or by calling The Health Plan’s St. Clairsville office at 740.695.3585 (toll-free 1.800.624.6961).

Improving Bone Health

Have you had a bone density test?

About 54 million Americans have osteoporosis or low bone density.

Osteoporosis is a disease that results in weak bones that can easily be broken. There are several risk factors for osteoporosis. Some of those risk factors you can’t control, like being over 50, being female, low body weight, menopause and family history of osteoporosis.

But some risk factors for menopause are controllable, like not getting enough calcium and vitamin D, not eating enough fruits and vegetables, having an inactive lifestyle, and drinking too much alcohol.

The Health Plan encourages you to talk to your doctor about your bone health. Ask about a bone density test, which is the only test that can diagnose osteoporosis before a broken bone occurs.

If you have any questions, or you’d like to talk to a nurse at The Health Plan about how to manage your bone health, call our Health & Wellness Nurse, Cindy West, at 740.695.7647.
SilverSneakers

Free, fun fitness classes for The Health Plan Medicare members

Classes for all fitness levels

Exercise may reduce stress and anxiety, improve mood and memory, reduce health risks, prolong independence, and much more. But you might also find it fun, especially if you do it with friends.

As a Medicare member of The Health Plan, your SilverSneakers membership is FREE!

It includes a fitness membership you can use at more than 13,000 SilverSneakers locations across the nation. You can take group fitness classes designed just for older adults, use equipment such as weights and treadmills, and meet new friends who share your interest in a healthy lifestyle.

There are plenty of different classes for all fitness levels. Some SilverSneakers classes are even held at community centers, senior centers, and churches.

It’s easy to get started!

Visit silversneakers.com to check your eligibility, find your ID number, and locate your closest participating SilverSneakers locations.

When you visit a SilverSneakers location, just bring your ID number and ask for a tour of the location.

Do you have questions about SilverSneakers? Call the Quality Improvement Department at 1.800.624.6961, ext. 7659 or 740.695.7659.

Getting daily exercise can be a fun way to stay healthy and independent.

Quality Improvement Program Evaluation

We strive to exceed service goals.

The 2015 QI Program Evaluation is a year-end review that determines if the quality of care and service goals set forth at the beginning of the year were met. If a goal has not been met, new programs are put in place to help us reach these goals. The 2016 Quality Improvement Program describes The Health Plan organization and each department’s responsibilities in meeting our goals for quality care and service.

Both of these documents are available to you when you call the Quality Improvement Department at 1.800.624.6961, ext. 7659 or 740.695.7659.
Have you signed up for CoreWellness?

Our CoreWellness program is a free online tool to help you adopt and sustain healthy behaviors.

Why sign up?

What’s great about the program is that it’s customized to you! After you take the Compass Health Assessment, you’ll get a custom HealthMap with ways to help you improve your overall health.

Some great features include the ability to identify strengths and risks, then take a challenge to improve on certain aspects of health and wellness. Those challenges aren’t just about physical activity either. They can be anything from taking small steps to improve your sleeping habits, to stressing less.

How to sign up:

Go to healthplan.org, and click “Member Sign In.”

If this is our first time logging on, click “Register.”

You’ll be prompted to enter some information, like your email address and Member ID number, which is found on your health insurance ID card.

If you don’t have your ID card, you can enter your social security number instead.

Once you’re signed up, you can click on “Access CoreWellness” to begin your journey to better health!

Would you rather have the health risk assessment, and other health tips and tools mailed to you? Or would you like help signing up online? Give the Quality Improvement Department a call at 1.800.624.6961, ext. 7659 or 740.695.7659.

Understanding Medicare Advantage and Supplement Plans

What are the differences between the Medicare Advantage and Medicare Supplement plans?

For Medicare Advantage plans, the insurance company becomes the administrator of Medicare benefits for its members. That is, the members do not use their Medicare card for services. They use their Medicare Advantage Insurance card and follow the conditions of the plan regarding:

- Network of participating providers.
- Defined copays and coinsurance for services utilized.
- Additional benefits like fitness center memberships, vision, and dental services which Medicare does not usually cover.
- Medicare Advantage plans are required to be at least as good as original Medicare in its benefit design/cost share.

Medicare Supplement plans are truly “secondary” to Medicare. That is, the beneficiaries present their Medicare card first, then the Medicare Supplement to cover expenses not covered by Medicare, according to the design of the plan they have. Highlights of Medicare Supplement plans are:

- The beneficiary uses providers who accept Medicare.
- Services must be covered by Medicare to receive coverage by the Medicare Supplement.
- There are ten standardized Medicare Supplement plans with varying levels of coverage. Premium differs based on plan design.

Do you have questions about your Medicare plan? Call The Health Plan at 1.877.847.7915.
Stay Active for Your Health

Simple activities can be good for your mind and body
No matter your fitness level, physical activity can have an impact.

Like most people, you’ve probably heard that physical activity and exercise are good for you. In fact, being physically active on a regular basis is one of the healthiest things you can do for yourself. Studies have shown that exercise provides many health benefits and that older adults can gain a lot by staying physically active. Even moderate exercise and physical activity can improve your health.

Being Inactive Can Be Risky

Although exercise and physical activity are among the healthiest things you can do for yourself, some people are reluctant to exercise. Some are afraid that exercise will be too hard or that physical activity will harm them. Others might think they have to join a gym or have special equipment. Yet, studies show that “taking it easy” is risky. For the most part, when people lose their ability to do things on their own, it doesn’t happen just because they’ve aged. It’s usually because they’re not active. Lack of physical activity also can lead to more visits to the doctor, more hospitalizations, and more use of medicines for a variety of illnesses.

Activities like gardening can be relaxing while also helping you stay active!

Staying active means you can keep enjoying your favorite activities

Prevent or Delay Disease

Scientists have found that staying active and exercising regularly can help prevent or delay many diseases and disabilities. In some cases, exercise is an effective treatment for many chronic conditions. For example, studies show that people with arthritis, heart disease, and diabetes benefit from regular exercise. Exercise also helps people with high blood pressure, balance problems, and difficulty walking.

Manage Stress, Improve Mood

Regular, moderate physical activity can help manage stress and improve your mood. And being active on a regular basis may help reduce feelings of depression. Studies also suggest that exercise can help with cognitive function, like your ability to shift quickly between tasks, plan an activity, and ignore irrelevant information.

Some people may wonder what the difference is between physical activity and exercise. Physical activities are activities that get your body moving such as gardening, walking the dog, and taking the stairs instead of the elevator. Exercise is a form of physical activity that is specifically planned, structured, and repetitive such as weight training, tai chi, or an aerobics class. Including both in your life will provide you with health benefits that can help you feel better and enjoy life!

Reference: nihsenorhealth.gov
You may have talked to one of these six employees of The Health Plan. They’re all in-house pharmacists, who work to make sure you are taking the best medications at the best price. Pharmacy care is an integral part of health care, and our pharmacists review our members’ files to be sure they’re getting the best care.

**Right dose.** Sometimes patients need different doses because of weight, age or gender. Our pharmacists look at these factors to make sure you get the right amount of medicine each day. They also look at the side effects of some drugs, and reach out to members to let them know how to take their medications safely.

**Duplicate medications.** If you go to the hospital and get a prescription, you might not realize you already take a similar medicine prescribed by your primary care doctor. The Health Plan has all of your medication history, and we can be sure that you aren’t taking duplicate medications.

**Drug to drug interactions.** If you go to multiple doctors or get your prescriptions filled at different pharmacies, you could be on a dangerous mix of drugs. Our pharmacists review member medications to help lower this risk.

Would you like one of our pharmacists to review your medications? Give us a call with any questions you might have, and we’ll do our best to find the answer within 24 hours.

Call the Pharmacy Department at 1.800.624.6961, ext. 7914.
Travel & Diabetes

Have a healthy and fun vacation
Plan ahead to manage your condition.

Summer is just around the corner. We all look forward to warmer temperatures and sunshine, and vacations. If you have diabetes, travel can sometimes present challenges. With a little extra planning, you can enjoy traveling without jeopardizing your diabetes health.

Talk to your doctor about your travel plans
Ask your doctor to give you a written document that indicates you have diabetes and will need to carry your medicines and supplies with you at all times when traveling. This will help you at security checkpoints. If you will be changing time zones, ask your doctor for guidelines on when to take your medicines.

Check your vaccination record
Check with your doctor to determine if any special vaccines are needed based on your destination. Have your yearly flu shot if you did not get it in the fall/winter.

Pack extra supplies
Bring plenty of glucose test strips, medication, and glucose tablets. You may need to test more often due to changes in your schedule and routine while traveling. Also, if for some reason your travel gets delayed, bringing extra ensures you won’t run out of supplies. Keep your supplies with you at all times, not in a trunk, luggage compartment, or refrigerator where it can be very hot or very cold, and risks being lost or forgotten.

Stay hydrated
Be sure to drink plenty of water and other sugar-free liquids throughout the day. Warm temperatures and high blood sugars will both cause your body to lose fluids. Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of water a day.

Keep your blood sugar in check
Your schedule and daily routine might be much different on vacation. That could mean more activity while touring your destination, drinking more alcohol, and eating plenty of different foods that might make it harder to estimate carbohydrate intake. All of these changes can put you at risk for low blood sugar episodes. Always carry your blood glucose meter and glucose tablets with you in case of a low blood sugar reaction. Wear a medical alert bracelet or necklace at all times in case you need professional help.

Take care of your feet
Hot pavement or sand and hidden sharp objects in tall grass can injure the foot and put you at risk for infection or worse. If you do not have normal feeling or sensation in your feet, never go barefoot. Check the bottom of your feet and between your toes at the end of each day to be sure there are no open areas or sores that you cannot feel.

With a little planning, you can enjoy a safe, fun, and healthy vacation!

Diabetes nurse educators are available for any questions or concerns related to your diabetes and can be reached at 740.695.7907 (toll-free 877.847.7907).

Member Rights and Responsibilities

Go to healthplan.org for information about your member rights.
Be Aware of Scams and Violations

Identity Theft & Enrollment
Scammers may target Medicare members.

Your healthcare needs can change quickly. If you are covered by both Medicare and Medicaid, you can change your health plan or drug coverage whenever you need to.

Scammers can try to get you to sign up for a plan that doesn’t fit your needs. This can happen if you change your coverage when needed or at the time of open enrollment. Before you make any changes, be sure they are right for you.

Identity theft occurs when someone gets your personal information and uses it to bill for medical supplies and services. Identity theft of senior citizens has more than doubled in recent years. Open enrollment and changes to coverage are prime times for scam artists to focus on Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries like you. Fraud costs us all and threatens the future of Medicare and Medicaid for years to come.

Marketing & Enrollment Violations
Plans must follow Medicare rules.

Marketing and enrollment violations occur when Medicare health plans do not follow the strict rules set by Medicare regarding Open Enrollment. These rules are in place to protect your rights and benefits.

Plans MAY NOT:
• Sell Medicare coverage door-to-door or leave leaflets, flyers, or door hangers at your home
• Call you unless you have given them permission
• Conduct marketing events in your doctor’s office, at the pharmacy counter, or in other places that deliver healthcare services
• Make you meet face-to-face with a plan representative or have you undergo a health screening to receive coverage
• Require you to provide your email address or other contact information, Medicare ID number, or Social Security Number at a marketing event

If you encounter any of these things, know that the company is violating Medicare rules and may be committing fraud.

The Health Plan • 52160 National Road East • St. Clairsville, OH 43950-9306 • 1.800.624.6961 • healthplan.org