Schedule your Wellness Visit

Are you taking advantage of ALL the benefits available to you?

As a Medicare Advantage member of The Health Plan, you are eligible for an annual wellness visit once every 12 months at no cost to you. The wellness visit is your chance to sit down with your doctor and put together your road map to good health.

The wellness visit includes an in-depth discussion of your health history, medications, weight and body mass index (BMI), nutrition, and physical activity.

You can also talk to your doctor about other important issues, like tobacco use and cessation options, your functional abilities and fall prevention, vision and hearing, cognitive abilities, and depression. Other age-related health screenings can include abdominal aortic aneurysm, bone-density, cardiovascular disease, cholesterol, colonoscopy, diabetes, mammogram, and more.

Your doctor can also review care you’re receiving from other providers and specialists, and give you lifestyle tips on maintaining wellness and reducing risks for chronic diseases.

Call your doctor to schedule your annual wellness visit today and take advantage of the benefits you deserve as a member of The Health Plan.
High blood pressure affects one in three American adults

Understanding High Blood Pressure

Awareness, treatment and prevention.

High blood pressure, or hypertension, means that the heart has to pump harder than normal for blood to get to all parts of the body. A heart that has to work harder than normal for a long time gets larger and weaker. Then it has an even harder time doing a good enough job pumping blood.

How can high blood pressure affect your life?
When your blood pressure is not treated, it can cause frequent hospital visits. It also can lead to strokes, heart attacks, and damage to the heart, blood vessels, kidneys and eyes.

The good news:
You can do many things in your daily life to reduce your chance of developing these problems.

• Follow up with your doctor regularly and know your numbers with the goal of your blood pressure being less than 140/90.
• Take medications as prescribed, even when you are feeling great. Talk with your physician if you are having side effects from the medications.
• Aim for a healthy weight by eating a variety of healthy foods.
• Be physically active at least 30 minutes daily.
• Quit smoking and limit the amount of alcohol you drink.

We can help
The Health Plan’s Health and Wellness Department includes nurses, a dietitian and outreach representatives. They are available to help you better understand your blood pressure. If you believe you would benefit with speaking with someone regarding high blood pressure, call 1.800.624.6961 and ask to speak to someone in the Health and Wellness Department.
In-home Wellness Assessments

You may be receiving a letter from The Health Plan and Advance Health if you’ve been chosen to participate in an in-home wellness assessment this year.

In an effort to better serve you, we have partnered with Advance Health to provide our members with a 60-minute visit with a licensed nurse practitioner, in the comfort of their own homes.

This visit does not replace the care you receive through your regular providers, and there is no cost to you for participating. We encourage you to take advantage of this program and its unique benefits.

Additional Benefits of the Program:

- One-on-one time with a healthcare professional focused on you and your unique needs.
- Labs performed in the comfort of your own home.
- Additional education: Recognizing lifestyle choices that increase or lessen the impact on your health and well-being.

We hope you will take advantage of this convenient, no cost program to learn more about how to better manage your health and well-being.

Prevent Colorectal Cancer

The importance of screenings

Did you know colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States? You can protect yourself by getting the recommended colorectal cancer screenings, which can find polyps – or abnormal growths – so that they can be removed before turning into cancer.

To prevent colorectal cancer, you should begin regular colorectal cancer screenings at age 50. People at high risk of developing colorectal cancer should begin screening at a younger age. If you are older than 75, ask your doctor if you should be screened.

Recommended Screenings:

Fecal occult blood test (FOBT), which checks for hidden blood in three stool samples. This should be done every year.

Flexible sigmoidoscopy, where doctors use a flexible, lighted tube to look at the interior walls of the rectum. This should be done every three to five years.

Colonoscopy, where doctors use a lighted tube to look at the interior walls of the rectum and colon, should be done every ten years.

These three screenings can help your doctor catch any abnormalities early, and help lower your chances of developing colorectal cancer.

Member Rights and Responsibilities

Go to healthplan.org for information about your member rights.
Doing Good is Good for You

Volunteering is a great way to make friends, learn new skills and help your community. But did you know people who volunteer tend to lead longer, healthier lives?

**Boost Your Happiness**

We’ve all experienced that warm feeling when we do something nice for someone else. A study found that feeling is caused by the brain’s pleasure centers. They become activated when we give to others, and they release endorphins, creating what’s known as the “helper’s high.” Lend a hand to an organization important to you for a rewarding experience.

**Stress Less**

Many studies have shown that helping others can decrease stress. A recent study looked at those who helped others, including simple things like holding open a door for someone or asking someone if they needed help. Those who did more helpful things for others had higher levels of positive emotion and lower stress.

**Live Longer**

One study found that older people who volunteered for multiple organizations were more likely to live longer lives than those who did not volunteer.

Research has found there are plenty of other health benefits of giving to others, including lower blood pressure, higher self-esteem, and less depression.

So whether you donate money, volunteer your time, or just spread kindness, you’ll also be giving yourself the gift of better health.

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Our Nurses are Here for You

**There are plenty of reasons to talk to our on-staff nurses.**

**After a hospital stay.** A nurse navigator at The Health Plan will call you within the first week of your discharge. The nurse will ask you how you are doing, help you understand your discharge instructions, and be sure you’re keeping important follow-up appointments.

**Behavioral health services.** The Health Plan’s nurse navigators are happy to answer any question or concerns you may have. They are skilled in addressing any issue you may be experiencing while also providing you with educational and community resources.

Feel free to call us toll free at 1.800.624.6961 and ask for the Behavioral Health Services Department, or visit our website, [healthplan.org](http://healthplan.org).

**Case management.** The Health Plan has registered nurses who are certified case managers. They coordinate health care services for members with catastrophic illnesses, injuries or behavioral health problems. You can contact the case managers by calling the Medical Department at 1.800.624.6961, ext. 7644 or 7643. After hours, you can contact Behavioral Health Services at 1.877.221.9295.

You may also submit a Member Case Management Referral Form online at [healthplan.org](http://healthplan.org).

**Call for help, any time.** 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.

A registered nurse can help if you have concerns, need assistance accessing services or obtaining urgent care out of the area. The Nurse Information Line is not meant to replace any services offered by our health care providers including after-hours assistance.

You can contact the Nurse Information Line by calling a nurse directly at 304.639.8597 or by calling The Health Plan at 1.800.624.6961.
Living With COPD

Simple lifestyle changes can be effective treatment options
Our COPD nurse educators can help you make changes to improve your health.

COPD stands for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and is a term used to describe the chronic lung diseases of emphysema and chronic bronchitis. It is a progressive lung disease that makes it hard to breathe. With lifestyle changes and medication, COPD can be treated and sometimes even prevented.

What causes COPD? How is it diagnosed?
The main cause of COPD is smoking. Other causes include long-term exposure to second-hand smoke, fumes, chemicals, or air pollution. There can be a genetic cause, but this is rare. COPD is diagnosed based on smoking and health history, and symptoms of shortness of breath, or a cough with lots of mucus. A spirometry test should be done to determine how well the lungs work, and this can help diagnose COPD even before symptoms develop. Chest X-ray and blood tests may also be used. Based on these test, your doctor will develop a treatment plan for you.

Treating COPD
Treatments include:
• Maintenance and emergency inhalers, steroids and antibiotics as needed
• Pulmonary rehabilitation
• Supplemental oxygen
• Complementary therapies such as massage, yoga and acupuncture to improve quality of life.

Lifestyle changes
Many simple changes can be made to help treat COPD:
• Stop smoking and don’t start if you don’t smoke
• Avoid second-hand smoke and exposure to chemicals, dust, fumes and pollution at home and work
• Get pneumonia vaccines as recommended by your doctor
• Get the flu vaccine every year
• Practice good hand washing hygiene to avoid picking up germs
• Learn pursed lip and other breathing techniques to help with air flow

Follow up with your doctor regularly and talk about a spirometry test annually to monitor your lung function, monitor your treatment plan, and make recommended changes based on how well you are doing.

More questions?
COPD nurse educators are available to help you understand your chronic lung disease and make changes to improve your health. Contact The Health Plan at 1.800.624.6961 and ask to speak to someone in the Disease Management Department. You can also register for the COPD disease management program at healthplan.org by clicking Solutions, Disease Management, then “Disease Management Enrollment Form,” or through the CoreWellness portal at myplan.healthplan.org.
Advance directives are written documents that state your wishes at a time when you are not able to speak for yourself. The two most common forms are a living will and a medical power of attorney.

When are these advance directives used?
Your living will is a document that explains your medical wishes if you can’t speak for yourself. A medical power of attorney is someone you name in writing who will make medical decisions for you if you are unable. At difficult times, this role is very important to health care decisions.

When should you complete an advance directive?
It is your right and your choice whether you want to complete an advance directive. Advance directives are always a work in progress, because our lives and circumstances change. Speak with your family, the person you chose to be your power of attorney, and your doctor to let them know your wishes.

If you have any questions, please call The Health Plan at 1.800.624.6961 and ask to speak to a customer service representative. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.
Protect Yourself from Scams

Never give out your social security, Medicare, or health plan numbers, or your banking information to someone you don’t know. The Health Plan will not call you to confirm your Medicare ID number or health plan number, and we will not ask your social security number. Don’t be afraid to ask questions if someone asks for your personal information.

If you have a question about a call you received, or to report suspected fraud, waste, abuse or compliance issues, you can call The Health Plan’s Fraud Waste & Abuse Hotline at 1.877.296.7283.

If you suspect a scam or fraudulent scheme, contact the FTC to secure your personal information. Call 1.877.FTC.HELP (1.877.382.4357) or go to ftc.gov/complaint.

Coordination of Care

“Could you send the records to my PCP?”

It is an important question that you should ask every time you visit an emergency room, urgent care center, are admitted to the hospital, or visit a Veterans Administration (VA) office/health site.

Keeping your PCP aware of any tests, treatments or medications ordered by another provider can help to prevent potentially dangerous interactions and ensures you receive the most complete care.

Quality Improvement Program Evaluation

We strive to exceed service goals.

The 2017 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 2017 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.
Three Food-Drug Interactions to Avoid

Here are just a few examples of the way food can interact with medications.

Grapefruit + statins, antihistamines, and many other medications. Fresh grapefruit and grapefruit juice can affect how medications are absorbed. This includes some medications used to lower cholesterol, like Lipitor, Crestor and Zocor. Antihistamines like Allegra, Benadryl and Zyrtec can also interact with grapefruit, and so can many other drugs.

Grapefruit juice may seem like a healthy choice, but substances in the fruit can cause the drug to go into the bloodstream and stay in the body longer. This could lead to dangerous levels of the drug in your body.

Salt substitute + ACE inhibitors. While a salt substitute may seem like a healthy choice, especially if you have high blood pressure, it could lead to a dangerous interaction. Most salt substitutes are made with potassium chloride. ACE inhibitors, such as Lisinopril, Ramipril, and Quinapril, can cause the body to retain potassium, and too much potassium could be dangerous.

People taking ACE inhibitors should talk to their doctor before using salt substitutes, as well as eating other potassium-rich foods, like bananas, oranges, raisins and leafy green vegetables.

Kale + blood thinners. Blood thinners like Coumadin can be less effective if you overdo your consumption of vitamin K. Vitamin K is found in leafy green vegetables, such as kale, spinach, Swiss chard, and other leafy greens.

You shouldn’t stop consuming these foods, but instead should make sure you keep your vitamin K intake consistent. Your doctor may check your blood values regularly to make sure you stay on track.

Prevent interactions. For more information on your specific medications, check the Medication Guide that comes with prescriptions, or the Drug Facts on over-the-counter medicines.

If you have questions about your medications, talk to your doctor or speak with your pharmacist. Pharmacists can help, even if you are choosing an over-the-counter medication.

If you’re a member of The Health Plan, you can call The Health Plan’s Pharmacy Services Department at 1.800.624.6961, ext. 7914.

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