



Simply, the right choice.
COMMUNITY HEALTH PLAN



My CHP Connection

A quarterly health publication for Community Health Plan members

Summer 2005

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MyCHP SERVICE | will soon be live at MyCHP.com

To improve our service to members, MyCHP Service, an interactive online program, will be available on the Community Health Plan (CHP) Web site at www.mychp.com within the next month.

Your username to log in to MyCHP Service will be your member number, your initial password will be "Password1" and the first time you log in, you will be prompted to change your password — be sure to remember your new password.

To log in, on the CHP home page, click the MyCHP Service graphic:



A new window will appear where you can enter your username and password. Once you've logged in, you are ready to access the many services available to you:

- Eligibility information
- Claims information
- Referral status
- Ordering identification cards
- Changing your primary care provider
- Searchable Provider Directory
- And much more

If you have any questions about MyCHP Service, please contact Customer Service at (816) 271-1247 or (800) 990-9247.



www.mychp.com

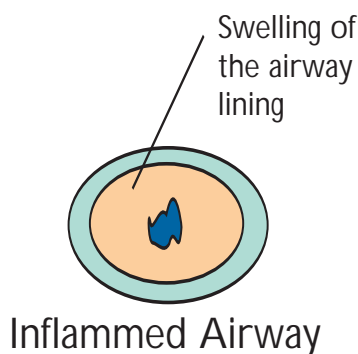
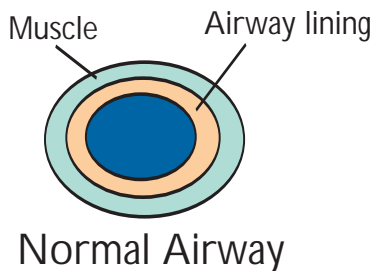
ASTHMA | triggers and treatment

If you've ever experienced an asthma attack, it can be quite scary. First, you're aware that your breathing seems shallow, like it's hitting a wall and is forced back out. Your chest gets tighter and tighter. There's a slight pain between your shoulder blades. You start to wheeze and it's difficult to breathe in enough air ... then panic sets in, you know you shouldn't panic because it will only make it worse, but you can't help it. You can imagine how this feels to a child.

Asthma is the most common chronic condition among U.S. children. Symptoms include:

- Wheezing
- Coughing
- Shortness of breath
- Chest tightness

Asthma causes airway sensitivity and inflammation. A narrowing or obstructing of the airway occurs when it is irritated. It's easy to see how children, who already have small airways, can have increased difficulty breathing.



Certain triggers in the home or outdoors cause asthma symptoms. The following are known asthma triggers:

Triggers in the home:

Mold

Mold grows in damp conditions (e.g. sinks, shower curtains, etc.)

How to control mold:

- Clean up any visible mold with soap and water.
- When washing dishes, cooking or showering, use exhaust fans or open a window.
- Repair leaky plumbing as soon as possible.
- To avoid mold growth, dry off damp or wet areas and items within one to two days.

Dust mites

Dust mites are microscopic bugs that live in sheets, blankets, pillows, carpets and stuffed toys.

How to control dust mites:

- Wash and dry bed sheets and blankets weekly.
- Use dust-proof covers on pillows and mattresses.
- Vacuum carpets, rugs and furniture often.
- Wash and dry stuffed toys.

Secondhand Smoke

Secondhand smoke from a burning cigarette or pipe or smoke breathed out by a smoker can cause an asthma attack.

How to control secondhand smoke:

- Don't smoke in your home or car.
- Don't let anyone smoke near your child.

Animals and Bugs

Saliva or urine from a warm-blooded animal can cause an asthma attack. Bugs, such as cockroaches (their droppings and body parts can trigger asthma attacks)

How to control this:

- If possible, keep your pets outside.
- If you have an inside pet, keep it away from the bedroom and off of the furniture.
- Vacuum your carpets and furniture often.
- Keep your counters, sinks, tables and floors clean.
- Clean up dishes, spills and crumbs.
- Store food in air-tight containers.
- Cover trash cans.



Outdoor Triggers

Asthma attacks can also be triggered by air pollution. When the Air Quality Index (AQI) is high, even healthy people can have trouble breathing. It's very important to know the daily AQI, which is available on your local TV news station, newspaper or you can visit www.epa.gov/airnow.

To lessen the effects of outdoor triggers:

- Reschedule high-energy outdoor activities for a time when the AQI is better.
- Reduce the intensity of the activity.
- Decrease the amount of time you spend engaged in the high-energy activity.
- If the AQI is high, postpone sports activities to another time.

Asthma is a highly treatable condition. Community Health Plan encourages families to work with their primary care provider to develop an action plan for treatment. Here are some items to discuss with your provider:

- Your child's asthma triggers.
- Instructions for asthma medications.
- What you should do when your child has an asthma attack.
- When you should call your doctor.
- Emergency telephone numbers.

To get the best use from this action plan, supply copies of your child's asthma action plan to his/her school (nurse, teacher, athletic coach), any babysitters, etc. Be sure

to review the plan with your child, so he/she knows what to do.

By taking control of asthma, your child can lead an active, healthy life.

Source: www.noattacks.org

Chemicals

Some products in your house, such as cleaners, paints, adhesives, pesticides, cosmetics or air fresheners contain chemical irritants that can worsen a child's asthma.

How to control chemical irritants:

- Make sure your child is not around when you use these products and use them less frequently.
- Follow label instructions closely and ventilate the cleaning area turning on a ventilation fan, opening a window or both.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE | the silent killer

145/97

137/85

152/93

What do these numbers mean to you? If you don't know your number, you could be at risk.

If your blood pressure level is consistently 140/90 mmHg or higher, you have high blood pressure (hypertension). Between 120/80 mmHg and 139/89 mmHg is considered prehypertension. An ideal blood pressure level is lower than 120/80.

Check your blood pressure regularly and at different times during the day if you think you might be at risk.

Systolic, diastolic ... what?

If you've ever wondered what the top and bottom numbers in your blood pressure mean, you're not alone. The top number is the measurement for systolic pressure, the force of blood in the arteries as the heart beats. The bottom number is the measurement for diastolic pressure, the force of blood in the arteries as the heart relaxes between beats.

If your systolic blood pressure is high and your diastolic pressure is under control, you have what

is called isolated systolic high blood pressure. This condition is common in those older than age 55.

Diastolic pressure is an important hypertension marker for those younger than age 55. The higher the diastolic pressure the greater the risk for heart attacks, strokes and kidney failure.

The dangers

High blood pressure is dangerous because it makes the heart work too hard and can make the walls of the arteries hard. It also can lead to heart failure, kidney disease and blindness.

It's known as the silent killer because it often comes with no warning signs or symptoms.

Are you at risk?

Approximately 65 million U.S. adults — almost one in three — have high blood pressure. It is most common in African Americans, who tend to develop high blood pressure earlier in life. Many Americans develop high blood pressure as they get older. Just because high blood pressure affects many people, it is not a normal part of the aging process. Controlling blood pressure is important because it is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

Check your blood pressure regularly and at different times during the day if you think you might be at risk.

YOUR HEALTH | preventive action

Navigating through all the health screenings available can be confusing. Here's a detailed list of preventive screenings that will help you maintain good health.

Blood Pressure

At any age, your blood pressure should be checked at regular medical visits with your provider. If you have high blood pressure, you could be at risk for kidney problems, heart disease and even stroke. Adopting healthy eating habits and an exercise routine should help control your blood pressure. In more acute stages, your provider may prescribe blood pressure medication.

Mammogram

A mammogram is an X-ray that creates an image of the inner breast tissue. This procedure is called mammography and allows the provider to view abnormalities in the breast. Female members, age 40 and older, should be screened every year.

Cervical Cancer Screening

A pap test is conducted so the provider can examine cells that have been collected from the cervix. The purpose of this test is to discover any abnormal cell changes due to cervical cancer and to detect changes

... continued on Page 7

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT | focus on high quality services

Community Health Plan (CHP) is committed to providing the highest quality services to our members and providers. CHP ensures that by developing and implementing our Quality Improvement Program this commitment is met. This program is based on CHP's strategic initiatives and mission. The program focuses on high-leverage/problem-prone areas and utilizes a systematic method of improvement and data collection

to make decisions and monitor performance, based on best practices/benchmarks supported by CHP leadership.

If you wish to obtain more information regarding CHP's Quality Improvement Program, you may contact Quality Improvement Manager Stacey Counts at (816) 271-1028.

FOR HMO MEMBERS | selecting your primary care provider

Community Health Plan supports a robust network of providers, specialists, hospitals and clinics. Within this network, HMO members will need to select a primary care provider (PCP). The purpose of having a PCP is to build a trusting relationship with a health care provider who understands your medical history. Your PCP is in the best position to coordinate your medical care needs including annual physicals, lab tests, X-rays, physical therapy, authorizations for hospital admissions and referrals to specialists.

You may select your PCP by visiting www.mychp.com and clicking on the link to MyCHP Service on the home page. Simply, log in to MyCHP Service using your username and password, then you have access to search the Provider Directory, or you can contact Customer Service to request a copy of the directory. Customer Service will assist you in finding a provider to match your preference for professional background, cultural, ethnic or language needs. Members may select a PCP who is a general, family medicine or internal medicine practitioner, pediatrician, physician's assistant or advanced practice nurse.

If you have not visited your PCP yet or if it has been more than a year since you had an examination, schedule an appointment for a check up. Take a written list of your current medications and your top three to five health questions or concerns. Communicate with your provider by asking any remaining questions and make sure you have a clear understanding of his/her answers.

Members always have the option to change their PCP. On July 5, 2005, you will have access to MyCHP Service at www.mychp.com. Just click on MyCHP Service on the home page, log in, and change your PCP. You may also contact Customer Service to help you select a new provider.

PPO members are not required to select a PCP and referrals to specialists are not required. Some medical services such as inpatient hospital admissions and home health care still require prior authorization. If you have a question about covered benefits or the need for authorization of services, please call Customer Service at (816) 271-1247 or (800) 990-9247.

WOMEN'S HEALTH RIGHTS ACT | of 1998

Community Health Plan provides mastectomy-related services including reconstruction surgery to achieve symmetry between the breasts, prostheses and complications resulting from a mastectomy (including

lymphedema). Keep this notice for your records. If you have questions, contact Customer Service at (816) 271-1247 or (800) 990-9247.

EMERGENCY CARE | coverage any time, any where

If you need emergency care, you are covered 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at home or away. If you have a sudden medical problem, it is important to act quickly. If you do not know what to do, call your primary care provider (PCP). You can also call the Community Health Line at (816) 271-4000 or (800) 455-2476 and talk to a registered nurse who can help you decide what to do.

An emergency medical condition is defined as the sudden and, at the time, unexpected onset of a health condition that manifests itself by symptoms of sufficient severity that would lead a prudent layperson, possessing average knowledge of health and medicine, to believe that immediate medical care is required, which may include, but shall not be limited to:

- Placing the person's health in significant jeopardy.
- Serious impairment to a bodily function.
- Serious dysfunction of any bodily organ or part.
- Inadequately controlled pain.
- A pregnant woman who is having contractions and:
 - o there is inadequate time to effect a safe transfer to another hospital before delivery.
 - o transfer to another hospital may pose a threat to the health or safety of the woman or unborn child.

Whether you are in or out of the service area, please follow these guidelines when you need emergency care:

- If it is an emergency, dial 911 for an ambulance or go to the nearest emergency facility. When you arrive at the emergency facility, show your Community Health Plan (CHP) Member Identification Card. Your emergency co-payment

applies for emergency services whether they are received inside or outside the CHP service area.

- If a delay would not be detrimental to your health, call the Community Health Line at (816) 271-4000 or (800) 455-2476 to talk with a registered nurse or contact your PCP for advice. Based on your symptoms, they will help you decide what to do.
- If you are unable to call your PCP before receiving emergency services, contact him/her within 24 hours. Let him/her know what happened and where you received care. Your PCP will coordinate your follow-up care and request referrals if necessary. Even in emergencies, all hospital admissions and certain outpatient surgeries require prior authorization.

When emergency treatment is provided outside the service area, the provider(s) may not file the claim to CHP on your behalf. If they will not, you will need to submit a statement that includes all the codes for the services received to CHP to have your claim paid or to be reimbursed if you have already paid the bill.

Emergency Care Benefits for PPO Members

CHP members who have the PPO benefit plan when receiving Emergency Room services from a participating hospital will be responsible for their Emergency Room co-payment as well as additional co-insurance and deductible payments that are required. If Emergency Room services are given by a non-participating provider, then out-of-network benefits apply.

update ...

Health improvement on the Web

Community Health Plan (CHP) launched its new Web site on April 12, 2005. One of the highlights of the new site is the Health Improvement section, which features:

- Wellness Connections
- Community Connections Disease Management
- CARE Program
- Community Health Line
- *My CHP Connection*
- Wellness Posters
- Immunizations
- Alternative Medicine
- Mental Health Screenings

OUR COMMITMENT | to your satisfaction

Community Health Plan (CHP) is designed to ensure that members are receiving the appropriate level of medically necessary services. This program is led by a medical director who is a board certified physician.

While CHP strives to meet members' needs, it also provides a process for members to address their concerns. The appeals process is offered to members, a designated member representative or a provider if the provider has recourse against you and entitles you to a thorough, timely and consistent review of your appeal. CHP offers both an internal and external review of your appeal.

The internal appeals process provides you with the opportunity to have your written appeal reviewed by a committee composed of CHP leadership. If your

appeal is not resolved to your satisfaction, you may contact CHP in writing and request that an external organization review your appeal.

While most concerns are successfully addressed during the internal appeals process, both levels assure that your situation will receive a full and comprehensive review by CHP.

At any time during the appeal process, you may contact the Department of Insurance in Missouri or Kansas, depending on where you live. The toll-free number in Missouri is (800) 729-7390; the toll-free number in Kansas is (800) 432-2484.

If your employer is self-insured, contact your Human Resources department for further details regarding the complaint process.

CARE MANAGEMENT | review process

Community Health Plan (CHP) recommends that our network physicians discuss all available treatment options with our members. If there are coverage limits, contact Customer Service for a detailed explanation of your benefits. Remember, you have the right to seek a second medical opinion, when necessary, to determine your treatment options.

CHP's Care Management Program is designed to carefully review and determine the appropriateness of medical services and if benefit limitations exist when authorization requests are made. Guidelines are referenced in the decision process, as well as specific employer benefit manuals and benefit riders.

The medical director, a board certified physician, reviews and makes decisions regarding medical service denials (services that are determined not medically necessary). For any declined referrals, your primary care provider (PCP) receives alternative care suggestions. A letter of denial will be sent to you and your requesting provider (usually your PCP), explaining the decision, the medical criteria, standards and guidelines for the decision and the appeal process for you to follow.

CHP does not offer incentives to our providers for denying referrals.

CARE PARTNERS | your resource for quality care management

Those diagnosed with high-risk conditions — such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and depression — will be assigned a care partner who is specially trained to coordinate care and services and provide education

and support. Care partners work with those with high-risk conditions to ensure that they have all the tools and resources they need to improve their health and quality of life.

DISEASE MANAGEMENT | improving your health

Community Connections, Community Health Plan's (CHP) disease management programs, are designed to help members, who have been diagnosed with a chronic disease, manage their condition by partnering with their provider. Disease management programs focus on member education and instruction on how to self-manage a chronic disease. The goal is to promote overall health and increase quality of life.

If you have been diagnosed with one of the following conditions, contact Customer Service at (816) 271-1247 or (800) 990-9247 to see if you are eligible to participate in one of these programs:

Diabetes Connections is available to members with type 1 or type 2 diabetes. This program includes educational phone calls, mailings and guidelines for managing diabetes.

Cardiac Connections is available to members who have been diagnosed with heart disease and congestive heart failure. This program provides phone calls, mailings and cardiac management guidelines.

Asthma Connections is a program for members

diagnosed with asthma. The clinical staff provides phone calls to members and their physicians, asthma care management, and member and provider education.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Connections is a program for members with airflow obstruction due to chronic bronchitis, emphysema or asthma. Using area clinicians and home pulmonary rehabilitation services, the COPD program staff provides phone calls to members and providers, care management, and member and provider education.

CARE Connections is designed for members diagnosed with depression.

Behavioral health nurses provide support to members over the phone, send educational mailings and coordinate care.

CHP believes it has a responsibility to its members and to the community to provide services that improve their health. If you would like more information about CHP's health improvement services, visit www.mychp.com.

Disease Management programs

Diabetes Connections

Cardiac Connections

Asthma Connections

COPD Connections

CARE Connections

update ...

Provider Directory: online search now available

Community Health Plan has made searching for a provider easier. In July, you can visit www.mychp.com, just click on the link for MyCHP Service on the home page and log in using your username and password. This gives you access to a searchable Provider Directory. It's as simple as inputting the information you would like to sort by and clicking search.

If you do not have Internet access and would like a copy of the Provider Directory, please contact Customer Service at (816) 271-1247 or (800) 990-9247.

LOW BACK PAIN

Low back pain is so common that four out of five adults experience significant low back pain during their life. It is one of the most frequent causes of lost workdays in adults younger than age 45.

Symptoms may come and go or your condition could be more severe. Low back pain is considered acute if it lasts less than six weeks, sub-acute if it lasts 6 – 12 weeks or chronic if it lasts more than 12 weeks.

A pain or ache between the bottom of the ribs or at the back and the top of the legs is the most common symptom. Pain may begin suddenly or progress slowly, but it is not isolated to the lower back. You may experience pain in your buttocks, legs, even as far down as your feet. Simple activities such as turning over in bed and sitting up become agonizing. Sneezing or coughing may lead to painful spasms.

The lower (lumbar) spine is a complex structure that connects your upper body and lower body. Your lumbar spine provides mobility and strength for turning, twisting or bending. Low back pain can significantly reduce your quality of life.

Common causes

Injuries, sprain and strain are the most common causes of low back pain, but there are combinations

prevention

of other factors that may increase your risk:

- Poor physical condition
- Improper use
- Obesity
- Smoking

Diagnosis

Most low back pain cases respond to simple treatments. To best determine the type of treatment you need, the following tests may be necessary for diagnosis:

- X-ray: shows arthritis and bone diseases, but does not show soft tissues such as the disks or nerves.
- Computerized tomography (CT) scan or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI): shows soft tissue damage.
- Electromyography (EMG): shows if the spine condition caused nerve or muscle damage.

Surgery

Most low back pain, from acute to chronic, can be treated without surgery. The most common reason for surgery on the lower back is to remove the pressure from a “slipped disk” if it has not responded to other treatments.

If you experience low back pain, visit your health care provider for treatment and to develop a long-term prevention plan.

LEAD POISONING

Lead is highly toxic to humans, especially children. A soft, heavy, blue-gray metal, lead occurs naturally in the earth’s crust, but it can cause irreversible damage to a child’s health. More than 400,000 U.S. children have blood lead levels high enough to put them at risk for the major health concerns: learning disabilities, behavioral problems, attention deficit disorders, stunted growth, impaired hearing and kidney damage. Adults exposed to lead may have increased blood pressure, fertility problems, nerve disorders, muscle and joint pain, irritability and memory or concentration problems. Avoid exposure

Exposure to lead is less dangerous for adults than for children, but to stay healthy, avoid exposure. Lead may be found in deteriorating paint, bare soil, household dust, air, drinking water, food, home remedies, ceramics,

protection

hair dyes and other cosmetics. Children with elevated blood lead levels are typically exposed to it in their own home.

Major source of exposure

Lead paint is a major source of concern today. It is found mainly in older housing, because until around 1978, lead paint was used on the interiors and exteriors of our homes. This is until the Consumer Product Safety Commission issued a ban against lead-based paint. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates that approximately 38 million U.S. homes still contain some lead paint.

How do I know if I’m exposed to lead?

For more information or to inquire about a lead dust kit, visit www.nsc.org.

WELLNESS RECIPE | brought to you by Wellness Connections

White Bean Crostini With Smoked Trout

2 teaspoons olive oil*
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 16-ounce can cannellini or great northern beans, rinsed and drained
2 tablespoons chopped, drained oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes
1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
18 ½-inch-thick slices thin (2-inch-round) baguette, toasted
4 ounces smoked skinless, boneless trout, broken into chunks
18 small thyme sprigs

Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add garlic; cook 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add beans, sun-dried tomatoes, thyme and pepper. Cook 1 minute, stirring occasionally. Transfer mixture to a food processor; process until smooth. (Spread may be refrigerated up to 1 day before serving. Let it reach room temperature before assembling with toast, trout and thyme.)

Spread bean mixture over toasted bread; top each appetizer with a piece of trout and a thyme sprig. Serve at room temperature.

*For added flavor, use the oil from the jar of sun-dried tomatoes. Recipe Copyright © health magazine as printed at WebMD.

Nutritional facts

Serves: 1 appetizer
Calories: 65
Total fat: 2 g
Saturated fat: 0 g
Cholesterol: 2 mg

Sodium: 161 mg
Carbohydrates: 9 g
Fiber: 1 g
Protein: 3 g

GENERIC DRUGS | a cost savings for you

Did you know that almost half of all prescriptions filled in the United States are filled with generic drugs?

Generic drugs are lower-priced drugs, sometimes as much as 80 percent less than their brand-name equivalents. This can help you lower the amount you spend on prescription drugs. Generic drugs are less expensive because generic manufacturers do not have the costs associated with research, development and advertising as compared to brand-name drug manufacturers. Generic drugs are required to have the same quality, strength, purity and stability and must work the same way in the body as brand-name drugs.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires that all drugs be safe and effective. Since generics use the same active ingredients and are shown to work the same way in the body, they have the same risks and benefits as

their brand-name counterparts. Generic drugs must also meet the same standards of good manufacturing processes. The FDA will not allow drugs to be made in substandard facilities. In fact, brand-name companies are linked to an estimated 50 percent of generic drug production. They frequently make copies of their own or other brand-name drugs but sell them as generics.

Only you and your physician can decide if a generic drug is right for you. Just remember that generic drugs are less expensive than their brand-name counterparts, and this can save you and your employer money. This savings helps to control the cost of providing health care to you. If you would like further information, please visit the FDA Web site at <http://www.fda.gov/cder/ogd/index.htm>.

ALCOHOL | knowing the risks

Alcohol can affect your body in many different ways. In small amounts, alcohol can have a relaxing effect. But in large amounts, it can lead to impaired judgment, slow reflexes, slurred speech and difficulty walking. Alcohol can also interact with various prescription and non-prescription medications, intensifying the effects of the alcohol, the effects of the medications, or both.

When drinking alcohol, remember



that moderation is the key. That means for women, an average of one drink or less per day and for men, an average of two drinks or less per day. A standard drink is one 12-ounce beer, one 5-ounce glass of wine

or one 1.5-ounce shot of distilled spirits.

Heavy drinking is considered alcohol in excess of one drink per day on average for women and more than two drinks per day on average for men. Binge drinking is consuming five or more drinks on one occasion, meaning in a row or within a short period of time.

Alcoholism is a chronic disease that is progressive and even fatal. Characteristics of alcoholism are impaired control over drinking, preoccupation with alcohol, use of alcohol despite adverse consequences and denial.

If you want to help someone who drinks excessively, try the following:

- Don't make it easy for the drinker to keep on drinking.
- Don't stop loving the problem drinker.
- Don't nag, criticize, preach or complain.
- Address the drinking problem directly.
- Ask for help from friends, family or health care professionals.
- Detach, separate and walk away.
- Set a good example.
- Take care of yourself.
- Be there when the person is ready.

Your Health

... continued from Page 4

before cancer develops. Female members, age 18 and older, should have a pap test every one to three years (see "The Pap Test" article on the back page.)

Cholesterol Screening

High cholesterol is a major risk factor for coronary heart disease and even stroke. It's important to get a cholesterol screening if you are age 35 or older for men and age 45 or older for women.

Childhood/Adolescent Immunizations

Children and adolescents should receive the following immunizations by age 18: Hepatitis B (Hep B); Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (DTaP); Haemophilus influenzae, Type b (Hib); Inactivated Polio (IPV); Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR); Varicella (chicken pox) and pneumococcal conjugate.

Adult Immunizations

Adults should receive the following immunizations: Diphtheria, Tetanus every 10 years and influenza (flu shot) every year for members age 50 and older.

Colorectal Cancer

This leading cause of cancer death can be treated if detected early. You should have this screening if you are age 50 or older or have a family history of colorectal cancer.

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a disease that causes the thinning of bones, especially in postmenopausal women. Female members age 65 and older should be screened.

COMMUNITY health LINE

If you would like more information about alcohol consumption, contact Community Health Line at (816) 271-4000 or (800) 455-2476.

DIABETES | caring for your eyesight

Blindness is one of the unfortunate side effects of diabetes. Your eyesight may be unobstructed, but even when you show no signs of damage, you could be at risk. High blood sugar levels are known to cause damage to the blood vessels and nerves in your eyes. This damage causes eye problems known as diabetic eye disease, and the most common form of eye disease is diabetic retinopathy.

Diabetic retinopathy is caused by tiny blood vessel damage in the retina (the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye). When weakened, these vessels leak fluid. If retinopathy worsens, your eye forms new blood vessels on the surface of the retina. The new blood vessels are unstable and can bleed, cloud vision and eventually destroy the retina, leading to vision loss or blindness.

Diabetic retinopathy is a leading cause of blindness among American adults.

Should I be concerned?

If you have insulin-dependent (type 1) or non-insulin-dependent (type 2) diabetes, you are at risk

for developing diabetic retinopathy. Detecting diabetic retinopathy early is key, because it can be easily treated with a laser if no major damage has occurred.

Screening process

When you visit your doctor, he/she will perform a dilated retinal exam, using special eye drops to dilate (enlarge) your pupils. This allows your doctor to view more of the retina and search for signs of the disease.

When should I be screened?

- If you have type 1 diabetes: have dilated retinal exams five years after you're diagnosed with diabetes and every year after that.
- If you have type 2 diabetes: have a dilated retinal exam every year.
- If you are pregnant and have diabetes: have a dilated retinal exam during your first trimester of pregnancy.

To really slow the onset and progression of diabetic retinopathy, stay in control of your blood sugar levels.

This publication contains health information that is meant to complement your health care provider's advice, not to replace it. Before making changes in your medications, diet or exercise, talk to your doctor.



Simply, the right choice.

COMMUNITY HEALTH PLAN

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(800) 990-9247

Heartland Health Business Plaza

entry hours: 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

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