The Health Connection
APWU Health Plan
Together. Better Health.
APWU Health Plan's Quarterly Newsletter
Spring 2015 Volume 16 No.2

Prenatal Care

What is prenatal care?

Prenatal care is the health care you get while you are pregnant. Take care of yourself and your baby by:

- Getting early prenatal care. If you know you're pregnant, or think you might be, call your doctor to schedule a visit.
- Getting regular prenatal care. Your doctor will schedule you for many checkups over the course of your pregnancy. Don't miss any — they are all important.
- Following your doctor's advice.

Why do I need prenatal care?

Prenatal care can help keep you and your baby healthy. Babies of mothers who do not get prenatal care are three times more likely to have a low birth weight and five times more likely to die than those born to mothers who do get care.

Doctors can spot health problems early when they see mothers regularly. This allows doctors to treat them early. Early treatment can cure many problems and prevent others. Doctors also can talk to pregnant women about things they can do to give their unborn babies a healthy start to life.

How often should I see my doctor during pregnancy?

Your doctor will give you a schedule of all the doctor's visits you should have while pregnant. Most experts suggest you see your doctor:

- About once each month for weeks 4 through 28
- Twice a month for weeks 28 through 36
- Weekly for weeks 36 to birth

If you are older than 35 or your pregnancy is high risk, you'll probably see your doctor more often.



What happens during prenatal visits?

During the first prenatal visit, you can expect your doctor to:

- Ask about your health history including diseases, operations, or prior pregnancies
- Ask about your family's health history
- Do a complete physical exam, including a pelvic exam and Pap test
- Take your blood and urine for lab work
- Check your blood pressure, height, and weight
- Calculate your due date
- Answer your questions

At the first visit, you should ask questions and discuss any issues related to your pregnancy. Find out all you can about how to stay healthy. Later prenatal visits will probably be shorter. Your doctor will check on your health and make sure the baby is growing as expected. Most prenatal visits will include:

- Checking your blood pressure
- Measuring your weight gain
- Measuring your abdomen to check your baby's growth (once you begin to show)
- Checking the baby's heart rate

While you're pregnant, you also will have some routine tests. Some tests are suggested for all women, such as blood work to check for anemia, your blood type, HIV, and other factors. Other tests might be offered based on your age, personal or family health history, your ethnic background, or the results of routine tests you have had.

http://www.womenshealth.gov

A federal government website managed by the Office on Women's Health, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

Hypertension
High Option

Visit apwuhp.com for more details

Hypertension Management Program

Enroll and participate in the program to receive the following at no out-of-pocket expense:

- In-network medical office visits for the specific purpose of lowering your blood pressure
- In-network lab tests related to hypertension management
- Generic drugs received through mail order



High Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is the force of your blood pushing against the walls of your arteries. Each time your heart beats, it pumps blood into the arteries. Your blood pressure is highest when your heart beats, pumping the blood. This is called systolic pressure. When your heart is at rest, between beats, your blood pressure falls. This is called diastolic pressure.

Your blood pressure reading uses these two numbers. Usually the systolic number comes before or above the diastolic number. A reading of

- 119/79 or lower is normal blood pressure
- 140/90 or higher is high blood pressure
- Between 120 and 139 for the top number, or between 80 and 89 for the bottom number is called prehypertension. Prehypertension means you may end up with high blood pressure, unless you take steps to prevent it.

High blood pressure usually has no symptoms, but it can cause serious problems such as stroke, heart failure, heart attack and kidney failure. You can control high blood pressure through healthy lifestyle habits and taking medicines, if needed.

NIH: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

Don't Let Measles Join Your Family Vacation

In 2000, measles, a highly contagious and sometimes fatal disease, was considered eradicated in the United States. Thanks to an effective vaccine program in the U.S., measles was eliminated and no longer posed a major health threat here in the States. But at the end of last year, measles became a top news story all across the country, when measles made a comeback, originating, in of all places, Disneyland theme park in California.

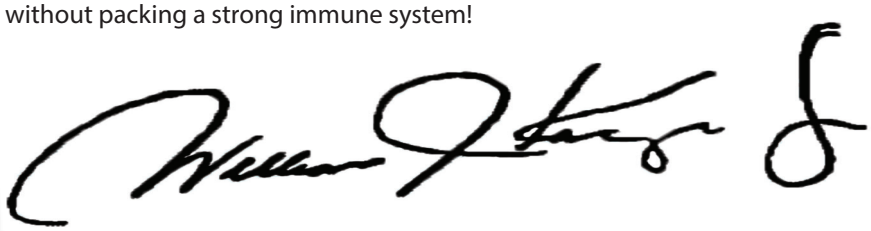
I know many of our members will be planning fun family getaways this spring and summer and I want to urge everyone to be sure they are prepared with more than just sunscreen and flip flops, but also up-to-date vaccinations. With just one infected employee, measles spread to more than 100 people in more than a dozen states in just a matter of months.



Measles is spread through the mucus of the nose and throat, much like the cold and flu viruses, and can remain active and contagious on surfaces for up to two hours. Measles symptoms typically don't appear until 10-12 days after exposure, which is why the Disneyland employee likely had no idea he/she had been infected. The first symptoms of the measles are common ailments such as fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, and conjunctivitis, none of which are cause for high alert on their own. The telltale measles rash, which starts on the face and spreads across the body, doesn't show up for about 14 days. At this point the original carrier has likely come in contact with hundreds, if not thousands, of other people.

Like all vaccines, the measles vaccine works in two ways. Not only does it provide protection to those who receive the vaccine; it also provides what is called "herd immunity" to the community at large when the general population is vaccinated. Think of it like building a wall to keep harmful diseases out of the community. The measles vaccine, known as MMR, is given in two doses—the first dose between 12-15 months of age and the booster dose between 4-6 years of age. Adults who did not receive the vaccine as a child should consider getting vaccinated. It is never too late to receive the vaccine. Always be sure to speak with your health care provider first.

Remember, vaccines for both children and adults are covered at 100% when you visit an in-network provider. There really is no need to leave for vacation without packing a strong immune system!



In Their Own Words

Ray Bell, APWU Area North Vice President

Ray speaks with conviction, especially when he's talking about the APWU Health Plan. When it comes to the Health Plan, he knows with certainty that there is just no better value when it comes to health care plans.

In addition to routine health care, Ray has had to navigate our health plan on a number of different occasions—broken bones with his wife and son that required surgery—and even on a very regular basis with his son's diabetes. His son's insulin pump (now on his second one), glucose meter (also his second one), and diabetes care have all been covered at 100% since his son, now 18, was diagnosed at age 9 and Ray says his coverage just keeps getting better. When his wife broke her wrist and ankle and needed surgery and rehab, everything was covered with moderate out-of-pocket costs. It's nice to only pay an $18 copay for rehab. And, when his son broke his nose and required two surgeries less than a year apart, there was no objection from the plan.

Quite simply, Ray says, "The Plan has always been there for me."

Ray has now also become a Health Plan Representative for his local area, but long before serving in this role, he was touting the merits of the Plan to everyone he spoke to. He says that most of the comments he receives are concerns that the APWU Health Plan doesn't have the name recognition of other plans under the Federal Employee Health Benefit Program (FEHBP). He says that people are worried that their health care providers won't accept the Plan. Ray takes the time to explain to everyone he has a chance to speak with that the APWU Health Plan has over a million doctors, since the Health Plan providers are contracted by Cigna.

Furthermore, he says that switching to our Health Plan would have no negative consequences on your health care coverage since it is highly likely that your doctors would be in-network which would not require you to switch providers. In fact, Ray is quick to point out that switching to the APWU Health Plan only puts money back in your pocket with more reasonably priced premiums and even offers more comprehensive coverage than some of the larger insurance plans. Many are surprised to learn the cost savings with our Plan and that we are partnered with Cigna.

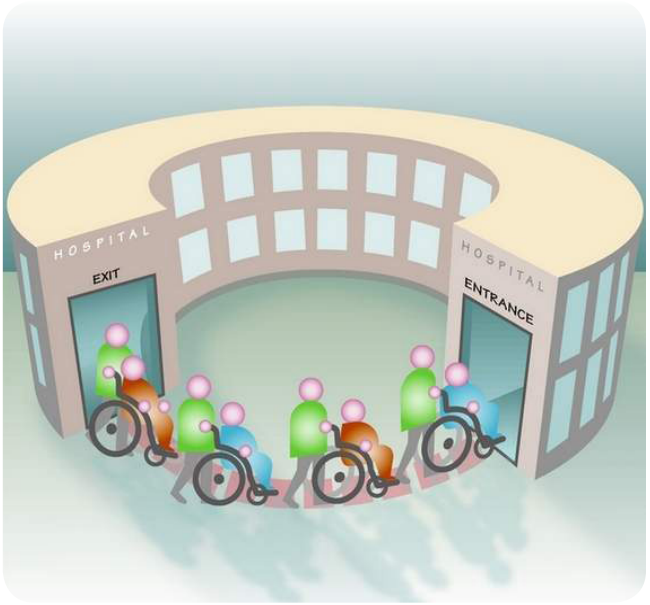
"Other FEHBP plans might have more advertising dollars to work with, but our Plan is just as comprehensive," he notes. "You would be hard pressed to find another plan that is better than this for the money."

Ray urges everyone, especially those who doubt our plan could be this good, to visit the APWU Health Plan website at www.apwuhp.com and compare the cost and benefits of our Health Plan options to others in the marketplace.

"So…thank you for your many years of service, APWU Health Plan."

Reducing Hospital Readmissions

All too often patients are discharged from a hospital only to return within 30 days. While some readmissions are part of a patient's treatment plan, many can be avoided. The issue of these unavoidable hospital readmissions is now front and center in the federal discussion about the quality and cost of health care. As patients, your time and cost sharing is important to us. Here are a few pointers for you to consider on your next hospitalization:



- Get a discharge plan and share it with your doctor at all of your follow-up appointments. Aftercare is critical!
- Promptly schedule all follow-up appointments.
- See your specialist or internist within two weeks from your discharge date.
- Store all names and phone numbers of health care providers, hospitals and pharmacies in one convenient location (i.e. smartphone, den, kitchen, favorite drawer).
- Make sure you have a list of all your medications and you understand what they are prescribed for.
- Promptly fill all prescriptions for medications and supplies (i.e. insulin pump, wheelchair, crutches).
- Take all medications on time.
- Understand possible side effects and danger signs.
- Ask questions and make sure you understand the responses to those questions.
- Have a family member at all your medical appointments including when you are discussing discharge instructions with your health care provider(s).

Members in the APWU Health Plan have access to two useful web tools through WebMD. The first link is to WebMD's Hospital Quality Guide. On this site members can find hospital facilities with the best outcome rates for their condition. The quality guide also compares hospitals based on specific procedures, survival rates, complication rates, and recovery rates. Hospital data is also available regarding responses to the Leapfrog group survey on patient safety. The second link is to WebMD's Medical Treatment Cost Estimator where members can select a type of treatment and receive in-network and out-of-network cost estimates. Members can compare the average cost and length of stay for specific medical procedures, based on geographic areas. Both of these links can be found at the bottom of the homepage for the APWU's health plan website (www.apwuhp.com). **Know before you go!**

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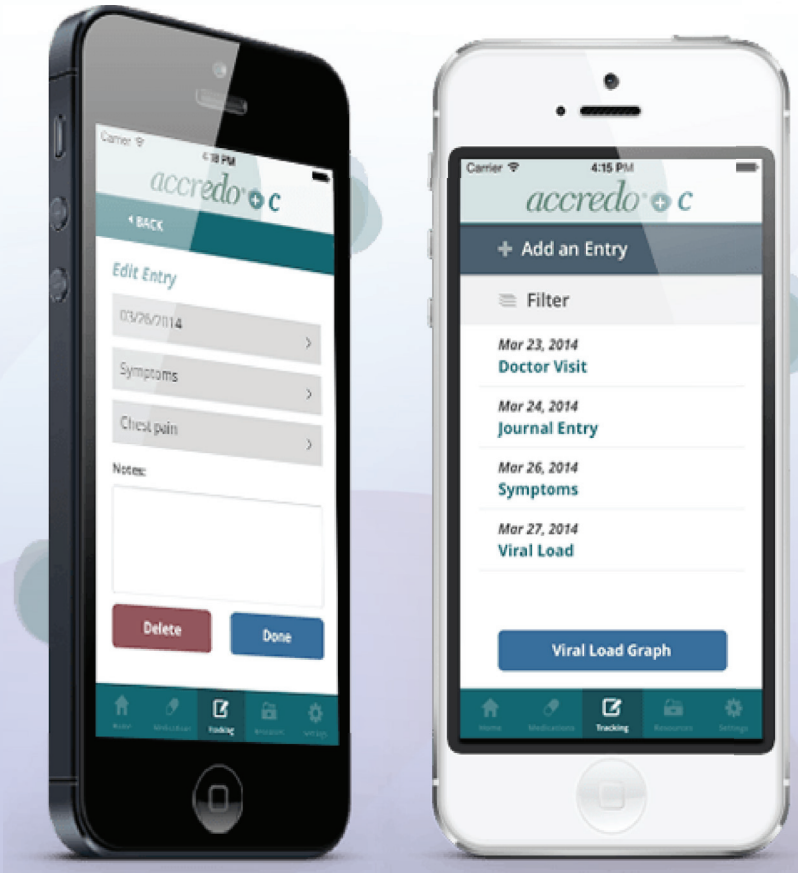
Now Available from Express Scripts: Mobile App to Manage Hep C Treatment

Accredo Plus C is now available for Android and iPhone! This mobile app from Accredo, the Express Scripts specialty pharmacy, can make it easier to keep up with a hepatitis C treatment routine. Created by pharmacists and nurses, **Accredo Plus C is available free to anyone** using medications to treat hepatitis C.

Information On the Go
Accredo Plus C gives users treatment information no matter where they are or what they are doing. Accredo Plus C can help with:

- Customized treatment schedules
- Reminders
- Treatment tracking and reports
- Options to email healthcare providers
- Easy access to resources

Download for free on the Apple App Store or Google Play, or go to AccredoPlusC.com to learn more. See for yourself, and then spread the word about this helpful tool.



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