APWU HEALTH PLAN

HealthConnection

Fall 2022

Vol. 23 | No. 4

Join the Great American Smokeout® on November 17

Quit smoking for one day

The Great American Smokeout is an annual event that encourages smokers to kick the habit. Join thousands of people in taking the first step toward a healthier life.

Make a plan to quit for good

Quitting smoking isn't easy. It takes time—and a plan. You don't have to stop smoking in one day. Just start with Day One. Let the Great American Smokeout be the day you make a plan to quit smoking.

Enjoy the benefits of quitting tobacco

There are many health reasons to quit smoking. And, when you quit your:

- Breath, clothes, and hair will smell better
- Sense of smell will return, and food will taste better
- Fingers and fingernails will slowly appear less yellow
- Stained teeth may slowly become whiter
- Children will be healthier and less likely to start smoking

Plus, you'll save money. If you smoke a pack a day, you spend almost $3,000 a year on cigarettes.

Enroll in an APWU Health Plan tobacco cessation program at no cost

Members pay $0

The tobacco cessation program targets physical, emotional, and social addiction and uses best practices to improve success. Nicotine replacement therapy is available at no extra charge.

High Option members
Call Cigna/CareAllies
800-582-1314



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Thank you for being our loyal member. The APWU Health Plan partners with postal and federal families to create a lifestyle dedicated to healthy living. We are committed to providing our members with innovative high-quality products and services.

Remember, to stay a High Option member, there is no action required. We look forward to serving you.

Thank you!

TOGETHER.
BETTER HEALTH.

HIGH OPTION

100% covered in-network services:

- Preventive care and screening
- Lab tests (covered blood work performed at LabCorp and Quest Diagnostics)
- Maternity care
- Accidental injury outpatient services within 72 hours
- Diabetes generic oral medications
- Visits to a registered dietician/nutritionist
- Tobacco cessation and weight managment programs
- Breast cancer screenings for women

NEW FOR 2023!

- $10 copayment for virtual visits through AmWell **(reduced from $15!)**
- Colorectal Cancer Screening Cologuard Kits are now covered starting at age 45
- Medical foods are covered to treat inborn errors of metabolism

ENROLL DURING OPEN SEASON

November 14 – December 12

OPEN SEASON HOTLINE

800.PIC.APWU (8:30a.m. – 7p.m. ET)
The hotline opens on November 7!

virtualopenseason@apwuhp.com
www.apwuhp.com
(Click on Open Season)

Cigna

PREMIUMS FOR THE 2023 PLAN YEAR

Self Only
enrollment code 471

Biweekly	Monthly
$121.00	$262.16

Self Plus One
enrollment code 473

Biweekly	Monthly
$238.95	$517.73

Self & Family
enrollment code 472

Biweekly	Monthly
$302.26	$654.90

HPV vaccines can help prevent cervical cancer

Cervical cancer begins when cells of the cervix, the lowest part of the uterus, start to become precancerous. Not all precancerous cells turn into cancer, but finding and treating these abnormal cells before they change is critical to preventing cervical cancer.

In the early stages, cervical cancer usually has no symptoms. Regular screenings are important because when doctors find cervical cancer early, treatment is more likely to be successful.

HPV causes most cervical cancers

A sexually transmitted infection called HPV, the human papillomavirus, plays a role in causing most cervical cancers. There are more than 100 kinds of HPV, about a dozen of which play a role in the development of cancer.

Most people get HPV at some point in their lives without realizing it because the body fights the infection. In rare cases, when the body fails to overcome the infection, it can cause the cells of the cervix to become cancerous.

The HPV vaccine provides protection against the HPV that causes up to 90 percent of all cervical cancers.

APWU Health Plan offers 100% coverage for in-network cervical cancer screenings

The test used to detect cervical cancer is a Pap test, which finds irregular or abnormal cells in the cervix before they have a chance to turn into cancer. When found early, cervical cancer is highly treatable and less likely to become serious.

Ask your doctor about the HPV vaccine

The HPV vaccine is approved for children and adults ages 9 to 26 and protects against the development of cervical cancer. Healthcare experts recommend getting the vaccine before the start of sexual activity. The vaccine is given in a series, though the number of shots you need varies depending on when you receive your first dose.

Mayo Clinic, "Cervical cancer — Symptoms and causes"

https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cervical-cancer/symptoms-causes/syc-20352501

Take Back Day is Saturday, October 29, 10am – 2pm

National Prescription Drug Take Back Day provides a safe, convenient way to dispose of unused and expired medications, including prescription opioids.

The last Take Back Day event, held in April 2022, collected more than 360 tons of unused medications at 5,144 collection sites across the country.

Six out of every 10 American households have unused opioids

Studies have found that up to 70 percent of abused prescription medications come from family and friends. When you responsibly dispose of unused opioids and other medications, you are doing your part to prevent medication misuse and opioid addiction.

Visit the official Take Back Day website to find a collection site near you, and join us in putting an end to the drug overdose epidemic in the United States.



Healthy ways to cope with stress and lower your blood pressure

When you're in a stressful situation, your body produces a surge of hormones that temporarily increase your blood pressure by causing your heart to beat faster and your blood vessels to narrow. Most people experience changes in blood pressure throughout the day, and the body can handle this, but frequent spikes in blood pressure can damage your blood vessels in a way that is similar to long-term high blood pressure.

Practicing stress-management techniques can reduce your blood pressure and help you adopt healthier behaviors.

Reduce stress to lower your blood pressure

Change your expectations. Learning how to manage your time can reduce stress. Don't force yourself to do too much. And give yourself enough time to get things done.

Learn to say no. You can't do everything for everybody. Reevaluate your priorities and make sure you're not overextending yourself. Paring down your to-do list can help reduce stress.

Recognize what you can and cannot control. While you have no power over some situations in life, you can change how you react to stress. Acknowledge your feelings and focus on finding solutions.

Avoid your stress triggers. You can't always steer clear of situations that may upset you, but you can take proactive steps to avoid stress. For example, if constantly being late for appointments stresses you out, leave home fifteen minutes earlier than you normally would.

Make time to relax. Take ten to 20 minutes every day to sit quietly, breathe deeply, and unplug from your phone. Visualize a peaceful place as you take slow, deep breaths.

Develop supportive relationships. If you respond to stress by isolating yourself, reach out to a friend or family member. We all need nurturing relationships.

Live a healthy lifestyle. Eat a heart-healthy diet and avoid foods that are high in salt and fat, which can increase your blood pressure. And try to get at least six to eight hours of sleep each night. If stress causes you to drink too much alcohol or smoke, find healthier ways to manage your emotions.

Exercise regularly. Physical activity is a great way to relieve stress and maintain a healthy heart, but be sure to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise program, especially if you have high blood pressure.

Practice gratitude. Focus on positive people and things in your life. Being grateful for what you have can help you feel good about the future and keep stress at bay.

Volunteer. Taking time out of your busy schedule to serve others can help change the way you perceive stressful situations.

If stress prevents you from engaging in everyday activities, consider working with mental health therapist who can help you change the way you perceive and react to stress.



American Heart Association, "Managing Stress to Control High Blood Pressure"

https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/changes-you-can-make-to-manage-high-blood-pressure/managing-stress-to-control-high-blood-pressure

Questions to ask during your prenatal appointments

Congratulations on becoming a parent! Whether this is your first pregnancy or you've been through it before, it's important to know the right questions to ask your healthcare team. Your first prenatal appointment usually takes place between the sixth and eighth week of your pregnancy. Before your appointment—and each subsequent visit in the months to come—prepare a list of the most important questions you have about your pregnancy.

Questions for your first appointment

- How often should I come in for prenatal appointments?
- What is my projected delivery date?
- Are the prescription medications I take safe for my baby? Do you need to adjust my medications?
- Should I take any prenatal vitamins or supplements?
- What should I eat and drink? What should I avoid?
- When will I feel my baby move and kick?
- How can I relieve my pregnancy symptoms (fatigue, morning sickness)?
- Who should I call if I have questions or concerns?

Questions about your health

- How much weight should I gain?
- Is it safe to exercise during my pregnancy? Are there any activities I should avoid?
- Can I travel while I'm pregnant?
- Is sex safe during pregnancy?

Questions about labor and delivery

- Where will I deliver?
- Who will deliver my baby?
- What are my delivery options?
- What are the signs that labor is starting? When should I go to the hospital?
- How can I tell if I'm going into labor vs. false labor?
- What if I start to bleed or have contractions before my due date?
- What should I include in my hospital bag?

Regular prenatal visits throughout your pregnancy can help catch potential issues early, reduce the risk of complications, and protect the health of your baby, so be sure to attend all of your appointments.

APWU Health Plan offers 100% for maternity care when you choose a network doctor



See your doctor within 30 days of being discharged from the ER for mental health or substance use treatment

Being discharged from the emergency department after receiving treatment for mental health or substance use is an important process in patient care. To ensure a safe transition of care, APWU Health Plan members must have a follow-up appointment with a primary care doctor within 30 days.

Follow-up appointments can help keep you out of the ER and give you an opportunity ask questions about your health and wellness.

Need help finding a primary care doctor?

Visit APWU Health Plan online at apwuhp.com and select **Log In** or **Register** to access your member portal. Or, select **Are my doctors in the network?** on the home page to access the provider directory for your plan.

Contact APWU Health Plan:
1-800-222-2798
1-800-622-2511 (TTY)
8:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. ET
Monday – Friday

How to avoid weight gain when taking Insulin for diabetes

Being overweight is a risk factor for type 2 diabetes. Staying active and eating a healthy diet can help you maintain a healthy weight, but for people who take insulin to control diabetes, the weight gain that is a possible side effect of insulin therapy can be frustrating because it seems like the treatment is part of the problem.

Gaining weight is a sign that the insulin is working. Your body is using sugar more effectively and able to store nutrients. When you're on insulin therapy, if you take in more calories than you need, the glucose that your cells don't use accumulates as fat. Fortunately, following a few tips can help you prevent unwanted weight gain.

Maintain a healthy weight while taking insulin

Develop a meal plan with a balance of nutritious foods. Eat a healthy diet that focuses on vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats, including nuts and plant-based oils. Avoid processed foods, refined carbohydrates, and added sugars.

Track your carbohydrate intake and overall calorie consumption. Measuring portion sizes can help you avoid eating more calories than you need.

Don't skip meals. Skipping meals may seem like a good way to cut calories, but excess hunger can make it more likely that you'll eat too much or make poor diet choices at your next meal.

Stay active. Regular exercise helps regulate blood glucose levels, burns calories, and promotes weight loss. Work with your doctor to determine how much moderate-intensity exercise you should get each week, and remember that your insulin dose may need to be adjusted when you exercise.

Always take your insulin as directed. Don't skip or reduce your insulin doses to prevent weight gain. If you take less insulin than prescribed, your blood sugar level may rise, putting you at risk for serious diabetes complications.

Ask questions. Talk to your doctor and make sure you understand all of the reasons you might be gaining weight. Work with a dietician or nutrition specialist to create a food plan that takes the side effects of the insulin into account.

In-network Registered Nutritionsts and Dieticians are coverd at 100%!

Mayo Clinic, "Insulin and weight gain: Keep the pounds off"

https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/diabetes/in-depth/insulin-and-weight-gain/art-20047836

4 ways to prevent lower back pain

About four out of five people have lower back pain at some point in their lives. The condition is very common but usually improves with rest, home treatment, and self-care, often within a few weeks. In some cases, you may need physical therapy or an over-the-counter pain reliever, but surgery is rarely required to treat back pain.

There are two types of back pain:

1. **Acute back pain** comes on suddenly and lasts no more than six weeks.
2. **Chronic back pain** is less common and lasts more than three months.

Causes of lower back pain

Most lower back pain is caused by strains and sprains that damage the muscles or ligaments. Strains occur when a muscle is stretched too far and tears, while sprains affect the ligaments that connect the bones.

Back pain can develop for a number of different reasons:

- Lifting something too heavy or twisting the spine while lifting
- A fall or a sudden awkward movement
- Poor posture
- Sports injuries

If a disk that cushions the small bones in the spine bulges and presses on a nerve, it can result in back pain. When a disk tears, it's called a herniated disk. As we age, disks can get flatter, resulting in a condition called degenerative disk disease.

Medical conditions that can cause lower back pain include:

- Scoliosis (curvature of the spine)
- Spinal stenosis (a condition in which the spinal column is too narrow for the spinal cord)

- Osteoarthritis (wear-and-tear arthritis)
- Osteoporosis (a disease that thins and weakens the bones)

How to prevent back pain

Keeping your back healthy and strong—and following four simple tips—can help you avoid back pain.

1. **Exercise.** Low-impact activities, like walking and swimming, can strengthen your back. Exercises that strengthen your core and increase flexibility are also important. Ask your doctor to recommend activities that are right for you.
2. **Maintain a healthy weight.** Excess weight puts extra stress on your joints and disks. If you're overweight, losing weight can prevent back pain.
3. **Practice good posture when standing and sitting.** If your job requires you to stand for long periods of time, shift your weight from foot to foot or place one foot on a low footstool to relieve the pressure on your lower back. When sitting, choose a chair with good lower back support, armrests, and a swivel base. Keep your knees level, and place a pillow or rolled towel in the small of your back to maintain its normal curve.
4. **Lift with your legs.** If you have to lift something heavy, keep your back straight and bend your knees. Ask for help if the object is heavy or awkward.

Cleveland Clinic, "Low Back Pain: Causes, Diagnosis & Treatments"

https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/7936-lower-back-pain

Lower your risk of colorectal cancer: foods to eat, foods to avoid

Colorectal cancer is one of the most common cancers in the United States. According to the American Cancer Society, about one in 25 people in the U.S. will develop colon or rectal cancer at some point during their lifetime. (The colon and rectum are located at the lower end of the digestive tract.) The good news is that eating a healthy diet can help lower your risk.

Foods and beverages to avoid

When it comes to preventing colorectal cancer, healthy eating is as important as knowing which foods to avoid. Staying away from some foods and beverages can help reduce your risk of developing colorectal cancer.

1. Processed and red meats

Eating hot dogs, lunch meats, bacon, salami, beef, pork, and lamb can raise your risk of developing colorectal cancer. You don't have to give up processed and red meat entirely, but eat these foods in moderation. Healthier alternatives include lean poultry and fish—and baked or grilled options are better for you than fried.

2. Processed and refined grains

White bread and other foods made with white flour can increase your blood sugar levels and lead to insulin resistance. This, in turn, can raise your risk of colorectal cancer. Whole grain foods, including bread, pasta, and oats, contain more fiber and can reduce your colorectal cancer risk.

3. Sweetened beverages

Sugar in drinks like soda can lead to chronic



inflammation, which has been linked to colorectal cancer. Healthier alternatives include water and low-calorie, low-sugar, or sugar-free beverages.

4. Alcohol

Alcohol use has been linked with a higher risk of colorectal cancer. If you drink alcohol, limit yourself to no more than two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women. A single drink equals 12 ounces of beer, five ounces of wine, or one ounce of 80-proof hard liquor.

Foods that fight colorectal cancer

High-fiber, plant-based diets have been linked with a decreased risk of colorectal cancer. Focus on eating a rainbow of foods, including colorful fruits and vegetables, along with whole grains and tree nuts, such as cashews, hazelnuts, walnuts, and pistachios.

Preparing meals in which vegetables are the main course and meat is a side dish can help you maintain a healthy weight and lower your risk of cancer.

Of course, diet is just one of many factors, including genetics and family history, that play a role in raising your risk of cancer. That's why it's important to get the routine preventive screenings your doctor recommends.

Changing your diet is hard, but taking steps to live a healthy lifestyle can also lower your risk for other serious health conditions like heart disease and diabetes.

Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, "Colorectal Cancer"

https://www.pcrm.org/health-topics/colorectal-cancer

Health Connection

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We want to hear from you!

In an effort to improve our future products and services,
we are asking for 5 minutes of your time to provide us feedback on your
experiences with the APWU Health Plan.
To get started just scan the QR code or visit this link: ***https://hcsurvey.apwuhp.com***