THE HEALTH CONNECTION

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APWU HEALTH PLAN

www.apwuhp.com
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Adolescent well-child visits



Adolescence, the period during which a young person develops into an adult, is a time of physical, emotional, social, and cognitive change. Well-child visits are crucial for kids of all ages, but these exams are particularly important for teens as they become more independent and take responsibility for their health and wellbeing.

What happens during an adolescent well-child visit?
The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends an annual well-child exam each year for adolescents up to age 21. During the visit, your child's health care provider may:

- Track your child's growth and development
- Check your child's blood pressure, vision, and hearing
- Perform a physical exam, which may include listening to the lungs and feeling the abdomen
- Administer screening tests and update immunizations

Help teens avoid risky behaviors
Well-child exams allow adolescents and health care providers to talk about prevention. Early intervention can help young people avoid engaging in risky behaviors, such as drinking alcohol, smoking, using drugs, or having unprotected sex. Many adolescents find it easier to talk about personal issues with a health care provider than with a parent.

Topics for discussion include:

- Healthy behaviors: Nutrition, physical activity, sleep
- Emotional wellbeing: Friendships, family relationships, mental health, stress, depression, anxiety
- Academics: School performance, activities, plans for the future
- Sexuality: Pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexually transmitted infections and diseases
- Safety and risk reduction: Use of tobacco, e-cigarettes, alcohol, and other substances; wearing safety belts and helmets; body image and eating disorders; bullying, violent behavior, and safe firearm storage

The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), "The Well-Child Visit"
https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2661144



Your health plan covers prenatal care

Prenatal care is an important part of a healthy pregnancy. If you didn't meet with your health care provider before you got pregnant, schedule a prenatal visit as soon as possible. Every pregnancy is different, so prenatal visits are crucial, even if you're not a first-time mother.

Prepare for your first prenatal visit

- Write down the date of your last menstrual period so your provider can determine your estimated due date.
- Bring a list of medications you take (including over-the-counter medicines or supplements), any allergies you have to medications, and your family medical history.
- Your health care provider will want to know about birth control you have used and any past pregnancies or history of miscarriages or abortions.
- Be sure to discuss any emotional issues you may be experiencing.

What happens during your first prenatal visit

- To confirm your pregnancy, you may have a urine pregnancy test.
- Your health care provider will record your vitals (blood pressure, height, weight, and body mass index) and perform a complete physical exam, including breast and pelvic exams.
- Depending on how long it has been since your last screening, you may also need a Pap test to screen for cervical cancer.
- A blood test will check your blood type, measure your hemoglobin (a protein in red blood cells), screen for infections, and test your immunity to various diseases.
- Your health care provider may also want to discuss your lifestyle, including your use of tobacco, alcohol, or caffeine, and a range of other issues—diet, exercise, and nutrition.

Ask questions

Bring a list of questions you have about your pregnancy and birth options. Questions may include:

- Who should I call if I have questions?
- What should I do if I start to bleed or get cramps?
- Should I take prenatal vitamins?
- How much weight should I gain?
- Can I exercise during my pregnancy?
- Can I still have sex?
- When should I schedule my next prenatal visit?
- What are my labor and delivery options?
- Is there a possibility that I may need a Cesarean delivery?

Enroll in the Healthy Pregnancy Program at no added cost.

High Option members
Call 1-800-582-1314

American Pregnancy Association, "Your First Prenatal Visit" https://americanpregnancy.org/healthy-pregnancy/planning/first-prenatal-visit-71023/

COVID-19 testing basics

If you think you have COVID-19, contact your primary care doctor. The website of your local health department may also provide information on testing in your area.

When should you get tested?
You should get tested for COVID-19 if you:

- Have symptoms (fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea)
- Were in close contact (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19
- Took part in activities that did not allow for social distancing (for example, you traveled by plane, attended a large gathering, or spent time in a crowded indoor setting)
- Received information from your local health department or a contact tracer that you should get tested

Types of COVID-19 tests
There are two different types of tests for COVID-19: diagnostic tests and antibody tests.

Diagnostic tests
Diagnostic tests tell you if you have a current infection. If you test positive, take steps to quarantine and isolate yourself from others.

There are two types of diagnostic tests:

- Molecular tests detect the genetic material of the virus
- Antigen tests detect specific proteins from the virus

Antigen tests usually provide faster results but have a higher chance of missing an active infection.

Diagnostic tests include rapid, point-of-care tests that use a mucus sample from the nose or throat, saliva tests that allow you to spit into a tube, and at-home collection tests that are available by prescription.

Antibody tests
Antibody tests might tell you if you had a COVID-19 infection in the past. These tests look for antibodies that your immune system made to fight the virus. Antibodies can take several weeks to develop after you have an infection. They may stay in your blood for several weeks or more after you recover, but researchers don't know if antibodies mean you're immune to COVID-19 in the future.

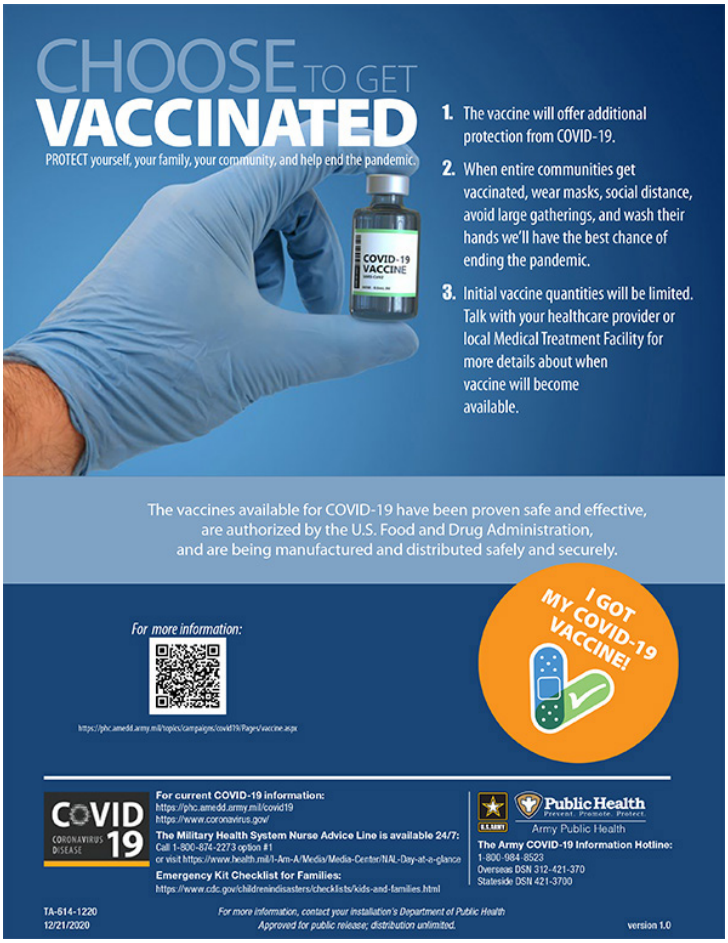
Antibody tests do not detect the coronavirus, so you should not use an antibody test to diagnose COVID-19.

Even if a test finds antibodies in your system, health professionals encourage you to keep taking steps to protect yourself and others:

- Maintain social distancing
- Wear a mask
- Wash your hands frequently

Test accuracy
No test is 100 percent accurate. Factors that may affect a test's accuracy include:

- Errors in how the sample is collected
- The sample is contaminated during analysis
- The sample is not kept at the right temperature
- The chemicals don't work correctly



If you test negative, you probably were not infected with COVID-19 at the time of testing. Continue to take steps to protect yourself and others.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA), "Coronavirus Disease 2019 Testing Basics" https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/coronavirus-disease-2019-testing-basics#:~:text=There%20are%20two%20different%20types,tests%20and%20antibody%20tests.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "COVID-19 Testing Overview" https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/testing.html

Healthy carbs for diabetes

Carbs (or carbohydrates) are your body's main energy source. When you eat or drink foods that contain carbs, your body breaks them down into glucose, a type of sugar. As the level of glucose in your blood rises, your pancreas releases insulin to help your cells absorb it.

People with diabetes have problems with insulin that can cause their blood sugar to spike. If you have type 2 diabetes, the most common form, your body doesn't make or use insulin well. Eating healthier carbs—and counting the carbs you eat—can play an important role in managing your diabetes.

Get to know the three types of carbs
There are three types of carbs in food. On nutrition labels, carbs are measured in grams. The term "total carbohydrates" refers to all three types:

1. Sugars. Fruit and milk contain natural sugars. Sweetened beverages and many packaged foods contain added sugars.
2. Starches. This type includes wheat, oats, and grains, vegetables (such as corn and potatoes), and dried beans, lentils, and peas.
3. Fiber. Your body doesn't digest the fiber in plant foods, but it helps you stay healthy.

Eat healthy carbs and avoid unhealthy carbs
Choose nutrient-dense carbs rich in fiber, vitamins, and minerals, and low in added sugars, sodium, and unhealthy fats.

The healthiest carbs contain a lot of fiber and include whole, unprocessed, non-starchy vegetables (like cucumbers, broccoli, tomatoes, and green beans).

Other healthy carbs include starchy vegetables (corn, peas, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, and plantains), beans and lentils, fruits (apples, blueberries, strawberries, and cantaloupe), and whole grains (brown rice, whole wheat bread, whole grain pasta, and oatmeal).

Unhealthy carbs include processed foods with added sugars, such as sugary drinks (soda, sweet tea, and juice), refined grains (white bread, white rice, and sugary cereal), and sweets and snacks (cake, cookies, candy, and chips).

Count carbs to manage your blood sugar levels
Many people with diabetes count carbohydrates to manage their blood sugar levels. The recommended number of carbs per meal depends on your age, weight, activity level, and other factors. Work with your doctor to determine a carb count that is right for you.

For diabetes meal planning, 1 carb serving is about 15 grams of carbs. Most people with diabetes should aim



to get about half of their calories from carbs. If you normally eat about 1,800 calories a day, about 900 calories can come from carbs. At 4 calories per gram, that's 225 carb grams a day.

Try to eat about the same amount of healthy carbs at each meal to keep your blood sugar levels steady throughout the day.

HIGH OPTION MEMBERS
Diabetes medications are now available through Express Scripts® mail-order:

- $0 copay for generic oral medication, formulary blood glucose test strips, and lancets (used to reduce blood sugar)
- $25 copay for a 30-day supply of certain insulin
- $75 copay for a 90-day supply of certain insulin

To order medications by mail:
- Visit apwuhp.com
- Select the Already a Member tab
- Under HIGH OPTION, choose My Tools, and look for Prescription Medications

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Carb Counting"
https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/eat-well/diabetes-and-carbohydrates.html

American Diabetes Association, "Get smart on carbs"
https://www.diabetes.org/nutrition/understanding-carbs

Exercise can lower your risk of high blood pressure

Regular physical activity strengthens your heart and allows it to pump more blood with less effort. This decreases the force on your arteries and lowers your blood pressure. Exercise can also help you maintain a healthy weight and manage stress.

For some people, exercise reduces or eliminates the need to take blood pressure medication. If you already have high blood pressure (or hypertension), exercise can help you control it. If your blood pressure is at a healthy range—less than 120/80 mm Hg— regular exercise can help prevent it from rising as you age.

It can take up to three months for regular exercise to start lowering your blood pressure. The benefits will last as long as you keep exercising.

How much exercise do you need?
You don't have to join a gym to get the exercise you need. Any physical activity that increases your heart rate will help—gardening, cleaning the house, vacuuming floors, climbing stairs, going for a walk, riding your bike, or dancing to your favorite music.

Try to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week. If you have a busy schedule, remember that short bursts of activity count. Three 10-minute walks offer the same benefit as one 30-minute workout.

Include strength training and flexibility exercises
Strength training can keep your heart healthy and reduce your risk of developing heart disease. Include strength training activity (using weights or resistance bands) at least two days each week. To help reduce your chances of injury, include flexibility exercises, such as yoga and stretching.

Stay safe and motivated when you exercise
If you haven't exercised for a while or have high blood pressure, ask your doctor about what level of physical activity is right for you. When you begin a new exercise program, ease into it.

Start slowly. Warm up for at least 10 minutes before you exercise, and cool down afterward.

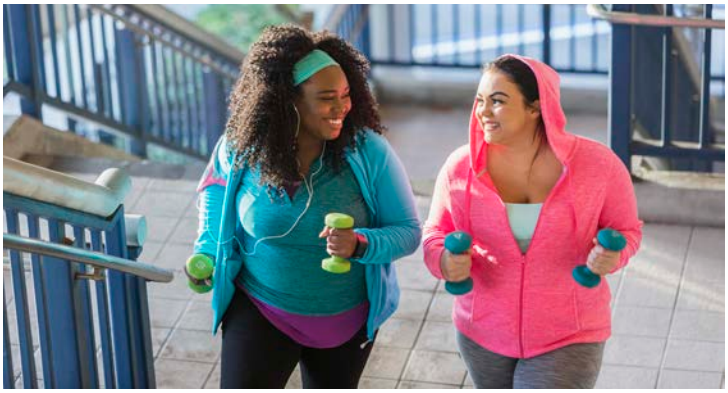
Listen to your body. Stop exercising immediately if you become severely out of breath or dizzy, or if you experience chest pain.

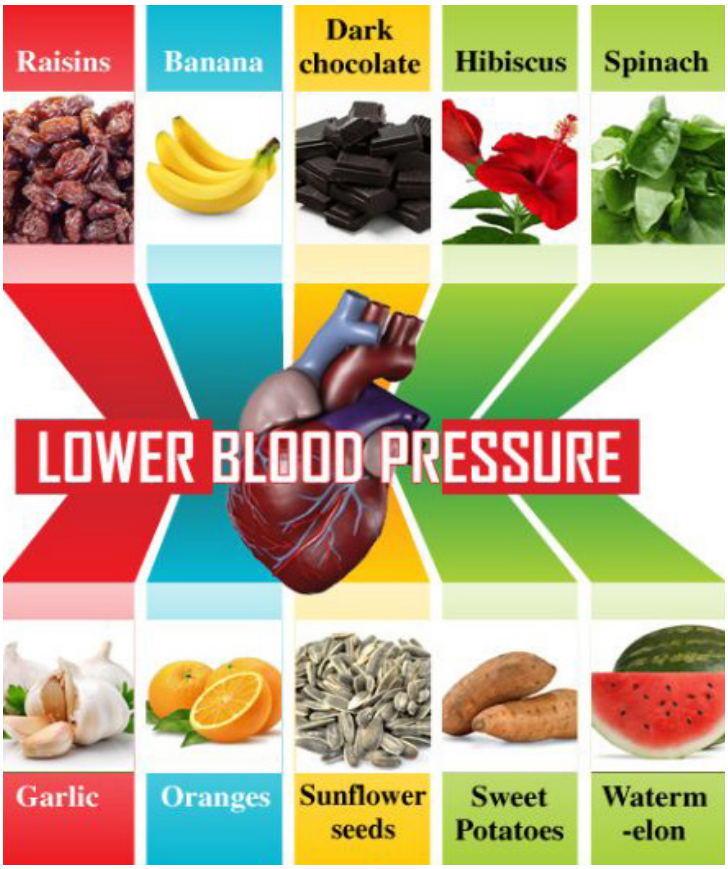
Reduce your risk of injury. If you're trying a new exercise, educate yourself about the proper techniques.

Remember to breathe. Holding your breath can raise your blood pressure and cause your muscles to cramp. Take deep, even breaths when you're physically active.
Don't get stuck in a routine. A variety of activities will help you stay motivated.

Mayo Clinic, "Exercise: A drug-free approach to lowering high blood pressure"
https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-pressure/in-depth/high-blood-pressure/art-20045206

American Heart Association, "Getting Active to Control High Blood Pressure"
https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/changes-you-can-make-to-manage-high-blood-pressure/getting-active-to-control-high-blood-pressure





Colorectal cancer: Know your risk factors

Colorectal cancer often begins as polyps—small clumps of cells—that form inside the colon (or large intestine). Over time, some polyps may become cancerous. That's why doctors recommend regular screenings, beginning at age 50, to help prevent colorectal cancer. During a screening, doctors can remove polyps before they turn into cancer.

You can change some lifestyle-related risk factors for colorectal cancer, but others are beyond your control. Having risk factors does not necessarily mean you will get colorectal cancer. And some people who get colorectal cancer may have no risk factors.

Risk factors you can control

- Eating a diet high in red meats and processed meats. Limit or avoid these meats, and eat more high-fiber foods, including fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Being physically inactive. Incorporate regular physical activity into your daily routine. Aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week.
- Being overweight or obese. Take steps to lose weight and maintain a healthy weight.
- Smoking tobacco. If you smoke and want to quit, APWU Health Plan offers tobacco cessation programs to help you move beyond tobacco—all at no extra cost.
- Drinking too much alcohol. If you drink, try to have no more than 2 drinks a day for men and 1 drink a day for women.

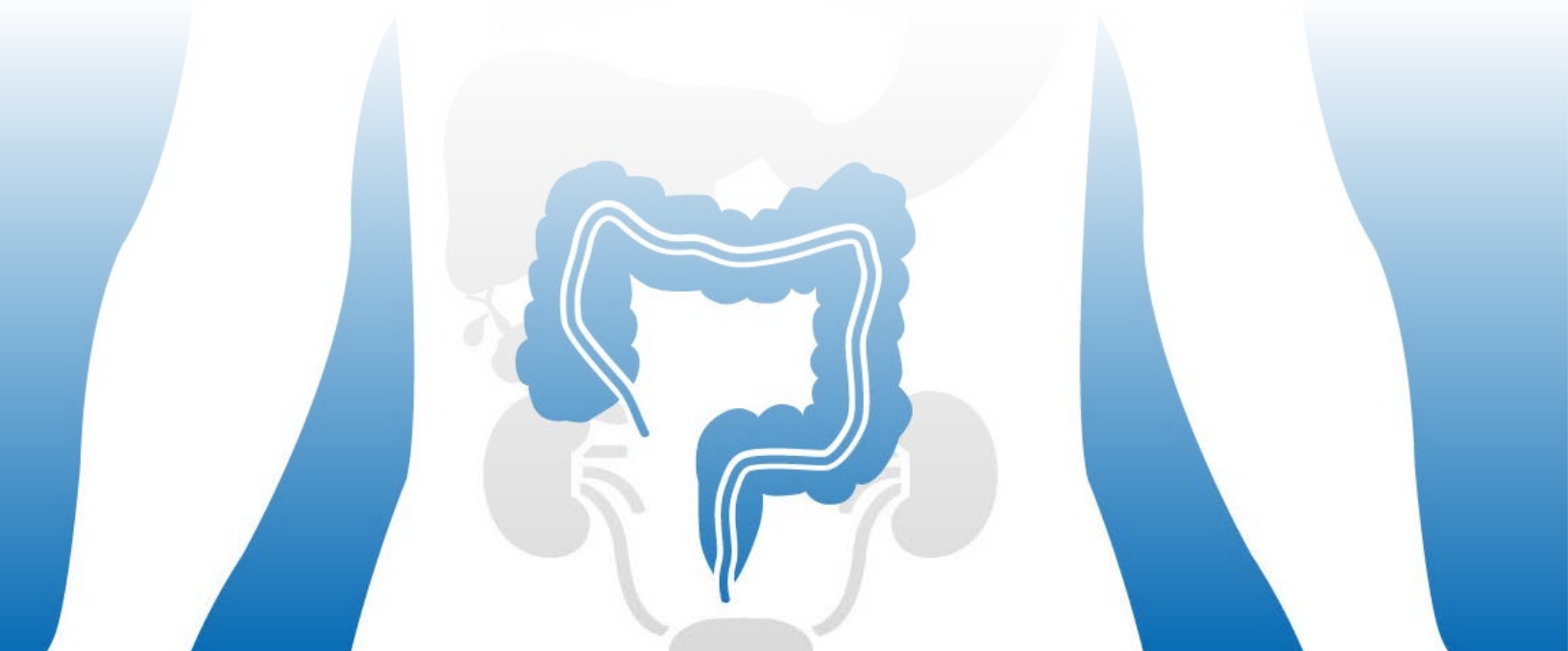
Risk factors you cannot control

- **Age**. The risk of colorectal cancer rises as you age. Most people with the disease are older than 50.
- **Racial and ethnic background**. African Americans have the highest rates of colorectal cancer in the U.S. Jews of Eastern European descent (Ashkenazi Jews) also have high rates.
- **Personal history**. If you have a history of developing polyps, you're at increased risk of colorectal cancer. If you had colorectal cancer in the past, you're more likely to develop new cancers in other parts of the colon or rectum.
- **History of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)**. Ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease can increase your risk of colorectal cancer. IBD is different from irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), which does not appear to increase your risk for colorectal cancer.
- **Family history**. Colorectal cancer most often occurs in people without a family history of the disease. However, people with a parent, sibling, or child who had colorectal cancer are at increased risk.

Many people with colorectal cancer experience no symptoms, particularly in the early stages of the disease, so it's important to get regular colorectal cancer screenings. If you have a high number of risk factors for colorectal cancer, ask your doctor if you should consider starting screenings before age 50.

American Cancer Society, "Colorectal Cancer Risk Factors"
https://www.cancer.org/cancer/colon-rectal-cancer/causes-risks-prevention/risk-factors.html

Mayo Clinic, "Colon cancer symptoms and causes"
https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/colon-cancer/symptoms-causes/syc-20353669



HOW TO PREVENT ASTHMA ATTACKS



Asthma causes inflammation in the airways of the lungs. Exposure to certain triggers can cause the airways to swell and the muscles to tighten, resulting in an asthma attack. Symptoms of an asthma attack include wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath, and tightness in the chest.

Asthma triggers vary from person to person
Not everyone with asthma has the same triggers. Knowing and avoiding your triggers can help you prevent an attack before it happens. Common triggers include:

- Tobacco smoke. Using tobacco is unhealthy, even if you don't have asthma. If you smoke, ask your doctor to help you quit smoking—and consider enrolling in an APWU Health Plan Tobacco Cessation Program. Secondhand smoke can also trigger an asthma attack, so don't let anyone smoke in your home, car, or workplace.
- Dust mites. These microscopic bugs in your home can trigger an asthma attack. To reduce dust mites, wash your bedding each week and dry it completely. Also, regularly vacuum carpets and floors using a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter.
- Air pollution. Pay attention to weather reports about poor air quality and avoid being outside when air pollution levels are high.
- Pets. Some people are allergic to proteins in the skin, saliva, or urine of animals—and allergic reactions can trigger asthma attacks. Keep your pets out of the bedroom, and use an air cleaner with a HEPA filter in your home.
- Mold. Fungus and mold often grow in damp kitchens, bathrooms, and basements and in places that have suffered water damage. To reduce mold in your home, fix water leaks and leaky pipes, scrub mold off hard surfaces with detergent and water, and run the exhaust fan when showering.
- Anxiety and stress. Strong emotions can trigger asthma attacks. Eating a healthy diet, staying active, and getting plenty of sleep can help reduce anxiety and stress.

Take steps to manage your asthma
An allergist will work with you to identify your asthma triggers and develop a treatment plan. This plan may include medications to prevent symptoms and relieve flare-ups and an action plan to identify when you need to seek help.

To find an allergist in your health care network, visit the APWU Health Plan website at www.apwuhp.com

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Common Asthma Triggers" https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/triggers.html

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI), "Asthma Triggers and Management" https://www.aaaai.org/conditions-and-treatments/library/asthma-library/asthma-triggers-and-management



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TOGETHER.
BETTER HEALTH.

Member rights and responsibilities

You and all members of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) Health Plan have both rights and responsibilities in the management of your health care. Management of your health care includes encounters with APWU Health Plan associates and the provider community.

The following outlines your member rights with the APWU Health Plan:

- Be treated with fairness, respect and dignity at all times.
- Receive understandable information about APWU Health Plan programs, services and contractual relationships in terms and language you can understand.
- Receive timely access to covered services and drugs, as applicable.
- Have the privacy of personal health information protected.
- Receive information about the organization, your plan, its network providers and covered services.
- Receive a prompt reply to questions or requests for information.
- Receive a copy of the Member Rights and Responsibilities Statement.
- Clear information on how to file a complaint or appeal and to ask us to reconsider decisions we have made.
- Make recommendations, as well as get more information, about APWU Health Plan's member rights and responsibilities policy.
- Know how APWU Health Plan pays in-network and out-of-network health care professionals for providing services.
- Participate with health care professionals in making decisions about health care.
- Have candid discussions of appropriate or medically necessary treatment options for health conditions, regardless of cost or benefit coverage.
- Receive complete information about diagnosis, evaluation, treatment and prognosis, or designate another person to receive this information on your behalf.
- Know the names and qualifications of health care professionals involved in medical treatment.

The following outlines your responsibilities with APWU Health Plan:

- Become familiar with covered services and the rules to follow to get covered services.
- Provide full disclosure of any other health insurance or prescription drug coverage you may have.
- Tell the doctor and other health care professionals about current enrollment. Help doctors and other providers by providing them with information, asking questions and following through on care.
- Understand health problems and participate in developing mutually agreed upon treatment goals.
- Agree to follow the treatment plan prescribed by your provider and to participate in your care.
- Treat health care professionals, staff and others with respect.
- Pay what is owed.
- Inform APWU Health Plan if you move.
- Contact Customer Service for help with questions or concerns.
- Provide complete and accurate information to the best of your ability about your health, medications (including over-the-counter and dietary supplement products) and any allergies or sensitivities.
- Inform your provider about any living will, medical power of attorney or other directive that could affect your care.