APWU HEALTH PLAN

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HealthConnection

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Breathe easier with asthma medicines

Asthma causes changes inside your airways that make it difficult to breathe. While everyone's symptoms are different, you can work with your doctor to create an asthma treatment plan that is right for you. Part of that plan may involve taking asthma medication that makes it easier for you to breathe by targeting the swelling, clogging, and muscle tightening in and around your airways.

How quick-relief and long-term asthma medications work

It's important to understand how different types of asthma medicines work. Learning how to use your medication correctly can help control your asthma and relieve your symptoms. Always take your medications as your doctor prescribes.

Asthma medicines and treatments work in different ways:

1. **Quick-relief medicines** work fast to relieve sudden symptoms. In addition to expanding the airways, which makes breathing easier, they help to clear mucus from the lungs.
2. **Long-term controller medicines** are taken every day, even if you don't have symptoms, to prevent asthma attacks. They seek to correct the underlying changes in the airways, such as swelling and excess mucus.
3. In many cases, doctors prescribe a **combination of quick-relief and controller medicines.**
4. **Biologics** target specific cells or antibodies to prevent inflammation inside the airways and are given by injection or infusion. Your doctor can personalize these therapies for you.

Work with your doctor to find medicines that are right for you

Make sure you understand the correct way to take the medicines your doctor prescribes. If you experience unpleasant side effects when taking medication, talk to your doctor or another member of your healthcare team.

Over time, your doctor may need to adjust the dosage based on your symptoms to help you better control your asthma. Proper treatment can help you live an active lifestyle and take part in activities you enjoy.

Asthma Treatment
https://aafa.org/asthma/asthma-treatment/



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Antibiotics aren't always the answer

Antibiotics save lives. Improving the way healthcare professionals prescribe antibiotics—and the way we take antibiotics—helps keep us healthy now, helps fight antibiotic resistance, and ensures that these life-saving drugs will be available for future generations.

When antibiotics aren't needed, they won't help, and the side effects could hurt you

Common side effects of antibiotics include rash, dizziness, nausea, diarrhea, or yeast infections. More serious side effects include an infection that causes diarrhea, which can lead to severe colon damage and death. People can also have life-threatening allergic reactions.

- Antibiotics do not work on viruses
- Antibiotics are only needed for treating certain infections caused by bacteria
- Taking antibiotics creates resistant bacteria

More than 2.8 million antibiotic-resistant infections occur in the United States each year, and more than 35,000 people die as a result.

If you or your child needs antibiotics, take them exactly as prescribed. Talk with your doctor if you have any questions or develop any side effects.

Questions to ask your child's healthcare professional

1. What is the best treatment for my child's illness?

Your child can feel better without an antibiotic. Respiratory viruses usually go away in a week or two without treatment. Ask your healthcare professional about the best way to feel better while your child's body fights off the virus.

2. What do I need to know about the antibiotics you're prescribing for my child today?

The antibiotic prescribed should be the one most targeted to treat the infection, while causing the least side effects.

3. What can I do to help my child feel better?

Pain relievers, fever reducers, saline nasal spray or drops, warm compresses, liquids, and rest may be the best ways to help your child feel better. Your healthcare professional can tell you how to help relieve your child's symptoms.

Adapted from *Antibiotics Aren't Always the Answer*, by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. To learn more about antibiotic prescribing and use, visit cdc.gov/antibiotic-use.

Common Condition	Common Cause	Common Cause	Common Cause	Are Antibiotics Needed?
	Bacteria	Bacteria or Virus	Virus	
Strep throat	✓			Yes
Whooping cough	✓			Yes
Urinary tract infection	✓			Yes
Sinus infection		✓		Maybe
Middle ear infection		✓		Maybe
Bronchitis/chest cold*		✓		No*
Common cold/runny nose			✓	No
Sore throat (except strep)			✓	No
Flu			✓	No

** Studies show that in otherwise healthy children and adults, antibiotics for bronchitis won't help you feel better.*

On behalf of the entire APWU Health Plan, I would like to take this time to welcome all of our new members and their families. With every new member that enrolls, our family gets bigger. And the APWU Health Plan wouldn't be here if it wasn't for our loyal APWU members so I would like to thank you for joining our family. Our goal is to focus on you and continue to serve you for many years to come.

Sarah J Rodriguez

Estimate the costs of care before you go to the doctor

The Cigna Care and Costs Directory lets High Option members find quality in-network healthcare providers and estimate the costs of care ahead of time.

- Search for providers and services in the Cigna network located near you
- Estimate the costs of care before you go to the doctor
- Read reviews from patients
- Compare quality ratings from national sources

To access the Cigna Care and Costs Directory powered by Castlight:

- Visit your member website at **apwuhp.com**
- Select **Members**
- Under **High Option**, select **My Tools**
- Under **Access more tools through myCigna**, select **Log in to myCigna**
- Look for the **Find Care & Costs** tab
- Select the **Cigna Care and Costs Directory** in the pop-up
- Sign up for **Castlight** to get started

Castlight is provided by your Health Plan at no cost and is completely confidential. Castlight is personalized for you. That means the information and features you see are based on your benefits and Health Plan.

Castlight | Cigna

Warning signs of prediabetes

Prediabetes is a condition where your blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not high enough for you to be diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. About 96 million adults in the United States have prediabetes, but more than 80 percent don't know they have it.

Without lifestyle changes, prediabetes increases your risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Over time, the condition can also damage your heart, blood vessels, and kidneys.

The good news is that people with prediabetes can take steps to prevent the condition from progressing to type 2 diabetes.

Symptoms of prediabetes

Prediabetes doesn't usually have symptoms. You can have the condition for years without any signs, so it often goes unnoticed until serious health problems arise.

If you're concerned about your blood sugar levels, or if you have any risk factors for diabetes, ask your doctor or healthcare provider about blood sugar screening.

Know your risk factors

Factors that increase the risk of developing prediabetes include:

- Being overweight
- Lack of exercise
- A large waist size
- A diet high in red meat, processed meat, or sugary beverages
- Being older than 45
- A family history of diabetes

Take steps to prevent prediabetes

Eating a healthy diet, staying active, and maintaining a healthy weight can help bring your blood sugar levels back to normal. Here are six things you can do to help prevent prediabetes:

- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Cut back on soda and sugary beverages
- Move more and sit less
- Lose weight
- Have your blood pressure checked
- Quit smoking

Visit the **Healthy Living** blog at apwuhp.com for tips on making healthy lifestyle changes.

Prediabetes – Your Chance to Prevent Type 2 Diabetes
https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/basics/prediabetes.html

Are prenatal vitamins really necessary?

Eating a healthy diet is the best way to get the vitamins and minerals you need when you're pregnant. However, during pregnancy it's easy to miss out on key nutrients, especially if you're a vegetarian or follow a restricted diet.

Always ask your doctor before you take any prenatal vitamin or supplement. If your doctor prescribes prenatal vitamins, be sure to follow the instructions. Taking extra vitamins could be harmful to your baby.

You may need more of some nutrients during pregnancy

Prenatal supplements usually provide calcium, vitamin A, B vitamins, vitamin C, vitamin D, vitamin E, zinc, iodine, and other nutrients. While your daily intake requirements for certain nutrients may increase when you're pregnant, avoid taking very high doses of any single vitamin or mineral.

Approved supplements contain recommended amounts of specific nutrients needed for healthy development of your baby.

- **Vitamin D** supports bone, brain, cardiovascular, immune, metabolic, and respiratory health and is critical for maintaining a healthy pregnancy.
- **Folic acid** helps prevent defects of the fetal brain and spinal cord. A baby's neural tube, which becomes the brain and spinal cord, develops during the first month of pregnancy, so your doctor may recommend that you start taking prenatal vitamins before you get pregnant.
- **Iron** supports the development of the placenta and fetus and helps your body make blood to supply oxygen to the fetus.
- **Omega-3 fatty acids** help promote a baby's brain development. While fatty fish is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, including DHA, when you're pregnant, you need to make safe, healthy choices and avoid eating fish that's potentially high in mercury.
- **Choline** can improve cognition and reduce the risk of certain stress-related disorders as your child grows up. Children who receive choline before birth have longer attention spans and improved problem-solving skills.

Talk to your healthcare provider about prenatal vitamins

Before you start taking prenatal vitamins, ask your doctor or healthcare provider about which supplements may be right for you. It's also a good idea to bring any vitamin or supplement bottles to your prenatal visits.

Prenatal Vitamins: Everything You Need to Know

https://americanpregnancy.org/healthy-pregnancy/pregnancy-health-wellness/prenatal-vitamins/



APWU Health Plan offers 100% coverage for in-network maternity care

How often should you have your blood pressure checked?

High blood pressure (also called hypertension) raises your risk for heart attack and stroke, but it rarely causes noticeable symptoms. Over time, it can damage your heart, brain, kidneys, eyes, and nervous system. That's why it's important to have a blood pressure test during your annual health checkup—or more often if you know you have high blood pressure.

A blood pressure test is part of routine preventive care

How often you should have your blood pressure checked depends on a number of factors, including your age, overall health, weight, and family history. According to the American Heart Association, anyone 20 years of age or older with normal blood pressure should have a blood pressure screening each year during a regular health checkup.

If you have been diagnosed with high blood pressure—or if you have a chronic health condition—your doctor may recommend that you monitor your blood pressure at home between regular healthcare visits.

How to interpret your blood pressure reading

Blood pressure readings are recorded as two numbers, measured in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg).

The first (or top) number—**systolic blood pressure**—indicates how much force your blood exerts against your artery walls during heartbeats.

The second (or bottom) number—**diastolic blood pressure**—indicates how much force your blood exerts against your artery walls while the heart rests between beats.

- **Normal blood pressure** refers to a reading where the first number is below 120 mm Hg and the second number is below 80 mm Hg.
- **Elevated blood pressure** refers to a reading where the first number is 120 – 129 mm Hg and the second number is below 80 mm Hg.
- **High blood pressure** refers to a reading where the first number is 130 mm Hg (or higher) or the second number is 80 mm Hg (or higher).

Take steps to lower your blood pressure

Making a few lifestyle changes can lower your blood pressure and improve your heart health:

- **Reduce the amount of salt (or sodium) you consume.** Many processed foods, including canned soups and frozen foods, are high in sodium.
- **Eat more fruits and vegetables**. And cut back on saturated fat.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Losing just a few pounds can help.
- **Stay active.** Ask your doctor to recommend exercises that are right for you.
- **Quit smoking.** The APWU Health Plan High Option includes a tobacco cessation program that provides counseling by phone, group therapy sessions, or educational sessions with a doctor. Drugs to treat tobacco dependence are also available for those age 18 or older.

Visit the **health management programs** page of your member website at **apwuhp.com** for more details.

Blood pressure test
https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/blood-pressure-test/about/pac-20393098

Get free at-home COVID-19 tests this winter

Every U.S. household is eligible to order 4 tests

These free at-home COVID-19 tests, which are also referred to as self-tests or over-the-counter (OTC) tests:

- Are rapid antigen at-home tests, not PCR tests
- Can be taken anywhere
- Give results within 30 minutes (with no lab drop-off required)
- Work whether or not you have COVID-19 symptoms
- Work whether or not you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines

When to take an at-home test

You should take a COVID-19 test:

- If you begin having COVID-19 symptoms, including fever, sore throat, runny nose, or loss of taste or smell
- At least five days after you come into close contact with someone with COVID-19
- When you're going to gather with a group of people, especially those who are at risk of severe disease or may not be up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines

What if you test positive?

A positive at-home test result means that the test found the virus, and you very likely have COVID-19. If you test positive:

- Stay home for at least five days
- Isolate from others in your home
- Follow the latest CDC guidance for isolation
- Talk to a doctor as soon as possible about your treatment options

You can report COVID-19 test results through **MakeMyTestCount.org** to help with public health efforts.

What if you test negative?

A negative at-home test result means that the test did not find the virus. Check your test kit's instructions for next steps. If you test negative, you should test again within a few days with at least 24 hours between tests.

To order free at-home tests:
Visit **covid.gov/tests**
Or call 1-800-232-0233 (TTY 1-888-720-7489)

Enroll in a Medicare Advantage plan that provides added benefits and reduced costs to High Option members

APWU Health Plan offers a Medicare Advantage plan for High Option members covered by Medicare Part A and Part B. The UnitedHealthcare® Medicare Advantage (PPO) for APWU Health Plan enhances your Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program coverage by reducing or eliminating cost-sharing for services.

Get a collection of benefits you won't find anywhere else:

- Zero out-of-pocket costs for covered medical services
- An $85 monthly Part B premium subsidy
- $60 quarterly over-the-counter item allowance
- $1,500 hearing aid allowance
- Dental coverage
- Prescription drug coverage (Part D)
- Nationwide provider network
- One plan with no need to coordinate primary and secondary payers

To qualify for enhanced Medicare Advantage benefits you must be:

1. **Enrolled in the APWU Health Plan High Option**
2. **Retired**
3. **Enrolled in Medicare Parts A and B**

Find out if you're eligible to enroll in the Medicare Advantage plan:
Call **855-383-8793**
711 (TTY)
8 a.m. – 8 p.m. local time 7 days a week

Choose a plan with valuable benefits and programs

Renew Active®[1]
Stay active with a free gym membership and access to thousands of digital on-demand workout videos and live streaming fitness classes.

NurseLine[2]
Access a registered nurse 24/7.

UnitedHealthcare HouseCalls[3]
Get an annual in-home preventive care visit at no extra cost.

UnitedHealthcare Hearing[4]
Receive a hearing exam and access a wide selection of custom-programmed hearing aids—available in-person at 5,000 providers nationwide[5] or through home delivery.

Provider network
See any doctor you want and pay the same cost share, as long as they accept Medicare patients and the plan.

Plans are insured through UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company or one of its affiliated companies, a Medicare Advantage organization with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in the plan depends on the plan's contract renewal with Medicare.

[1] Participation in the Renew Active® program is voluntary. Consult your doctor prior to beginning an exercise program or making changes to your lifestyle or health care routine. The information provided through Renew Active is for informational purposes only and is not medical advice. Gym network may vary in local market.

[2] The NurseLine service should not be used for emergency or urgent care needs. In an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. The information provided through this service is for informational purposes only. The nurses cannot diagnose problems or recommend treatment and are not a substitute for your doctor's care. Your health information is kept confidential in accordance with the law. Access to this service is subject to terms of use.

[3] HouseCalls may not be available in all areas.

[4] Other hearing exam providers are available in our network. Your plan includes benefits for hearing aid coverage outside of the UnitedHealthcare Hearing network. See plan for details.

[5] 2019 UnitedHealthcare Internal Data.

7 questions to ask during well-child checkups

Following the recommended schedule for well-child visits can help protect your child's long-term health and well-being. These appointments also give you an opportunity to talk to your pediatrician about growth, development, and behavior.

Here are seven questions to help you get the most out of your appointments:

1. Is my child growing and developing at a healthy rate?

At each visit, your pediatrician will measure your child's height and weight. Babies and toddlers often experience rapid growth, while gaining too much weight may be an issue for older children and teens.

2. Are my child's vaccines up to date?

Recommended vaccinations protect children from serious diseases, including hepatitis, measles, tetanus, and polio. It's important to get vaccines on schedule

because sometimes it can take multiple doses before a child is fully protected. Make sure you understand what each vaccine protects against, and remember that children age six months and older should receive an annual flu shot.

3. What foods and beverages should my child eat?

Good nutrition is essential for healthy growth and development. For babies and toddlers, you might have questions about breastfeeding or when to introduce solid foods. As children grow up, it's important to establish healthy eating habits. Ask your doctor about foods and beverages your child should avoid and what to do if you have a picky eater.

4. How can I keep my child safe?

Talk to your pediatrician about steps you can take to child-proof your home, protect kids from exposure to the sun, and protect against infectious diseases. Depending on the age of your children, you might have questions about when it's time to graduate from a car seat or how much screen time is appropriate.

5. Do you have any concerns about my child's mental health?

Mental health is important at every age. Whether your child is struggling at school or having trouble making friends, identifying an issue gives your pediatrician a chance to address it. Depression and anxiety are common among children and adolescents, so don't be afraid to bring up these issues.

6. Ask about any specific concerns you have.

Make a list of your questions before the appointment, and put the most important ones at the top. That way, you won't forget to ask about something that has been on your mind.

7. When should I schedule our next well-child visit?

Book your next appointment before you go home. You can change the date later, if needed, but scheduling your next visit while you're at the doctor's office can help you stay on track.

Member Rights and Responsibilities Statement

You and all members of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) Health Plan have both rights and responsibilities in the management of your healthcare. Management of your healthcare 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 healthcare professionals for providing services.
- Participate with healthcare professionals in making decisions about healthcare.
- 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 healthcare 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 healthcare 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 healthcare 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.

Health Connection

APWU Health Plan
799 Cromwell Park Drive, Suites K-Z
Glen Burnie, MD 21061
(800) 222-2798

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TOGETHER.
BETTER HEALTH.

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***

Manage your High Option health plan with your member portal.

Download the myapwuhp app.

The myapwuhp app is another tool that can help you manage your health plan. See your claims, year-to-date information, prescriptions, and more.

You must register for the member portal in order to use the secure app.

Available on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

