

Great Expectations[®]

FOR HEALTH

A BlueChoice[®] HealthPlan newsletter for women

Fall 2009

Women's Health Newsletter

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Preventing Flu

Follow these tips to decrease your chances of getting and giving the flu:

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread when you touch something that is infected and then touch your face.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. Use an alcohol-based hand cleaner when you can't get to a sink.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or the bend of your arm when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid contact with sick people. Stay home if you have the flu.

Swine and Seasonal Flu – Stay Safe

With flu season approaching, it's a good time to learn the facts about how to protect yourself and your family from the flu. In addition to the seasonal flu virus, experts are concerned that the H1N1 flu virus (what used to be known as "swine flu") may infect up to 50 percent of Americans. H1N1, in conjunction with seasonal flu viruses, has the potential to cause serious illness, more hospitalizations and more deaths than usual during the coming flu season.

Get vaccinated: The flu season begins in October, but experts are stating that you should get your seasonal flu shot as early as possible. A vaccine against H1N1 is expected to be available by mid-October, but due to limited supply, certain groups of people are encouraged to be among the first vaccinated. The at-risk groups, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are:

- Pregnant women
- Caregivers and family members of infants younger than six months, including parents, siblings, and daycare providers
- Health care and emergency medical services personnel
- Children and young adults six months to 24 years of age
- Peoples ages 25 to 64 who are at greater risk for flu-related complications because of underlying medical conditions, such as asthma, heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease and those with suppressed immune systems

BlueChoice HealthPlan covers flu shots at 100 percent after the office visit co-payment. We also cover FluMist[®], the nasal flu vaccine for seasonal flu.

Source: cdc.gov/flu

Seasonal Flu Myths

MYTH: The flu isn't serious.

FACT: The flu is a serious disease that can cause pneumonia, the eighth leading cause of death in America. People with chronic illnesses, like asthma, diabetes and heart disease, have a harder time recovering from the flu.

MYTH: The flu shot can actually cause the flu.

FACT: After a flu shot, you may feel tired and weak. But the vaccine DOES NOT cause the flu.

MYTH: If my family and friends have been vaccinated, I don't need a flu shot.

FACT: This so-called "herd immunity" is risky. You can still catch the flu from infected people in public places.

Preventable Diseases and Conditions



COLORECTAL CANCER

Colorectal cancer is cancer that occurs in the colon or rectum. It is curable if detected early. Screening tests can find polyps that can turn into cancer. If polyps are removed, it may prevent colon cancer.

Symptoms of colon cancer may include: rectal bleeding or blood in or on stool; changes in bowel habits; stomach discomfort (bloating, fullness or cramps); diarrhea or constipation; weight loss for no apparent reason; vomiting and/or constant fatigue.

However, some people may not experience symptoms. That's why colorectal screenings are so important.

Talk with your doctor about being tested. For BlueChoice HealthPlan members, most plans cover screening colonoscopies at 100 percent.* Check your schedule of benefits for more information.

** The 100 percent benefits does not cover additional anesthesia and pathology services, which we cover at the regular benefits levels.*

Source: preventcancer.org

SHINGLES

Shingles is a disease that may cause a painful, blistering rash. About one in three people will develop the disease during his or her lifetime.

A vaccine has been developed for adults ages 60 and older to help prevent shingles. You can reduce your risk of shingles by getting the vaccine, so ask your doctor if you should get vaccinated.

BlueChoice HealthPlan members can receive the shingles vaccine at their doctors' offices or at any of the CVS Minute Clinics in South Carolina. As a member, you will only have to pay the office visit copayment to get the vaccine.

For more information about the CVS Minute Clinics, call 800-868-2528.

Source: cdc.gov/vaccines

Do You Need a Mammogram?

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

According to the American Cancer Society, one in eight women will get breast cancer at some point in her life. Women can fight breast cancer by getting regular mammograms. A screening mammogram is an X-ray of the breast that looks for breast cancer.

The American Cancer Society recommends that women ages 40 and over get a mammogram every year. Ask your doctor if you should get a mammogram earlier than the age of 40.

For most BlueChoice HealthPlan members, routine mammogram screenings are covered at 100 percent at a contracted mammogram facility.

Healthy Pregnancies: How much should you gain?

Eating for two doesn't mean you should double your calories. Research shows that women only need 300 extra calories a day to maintain a healthy pregnancy. This calorie guideline is important because gaining too much weight could put you at risk for developing gestational diabetes. Gaining too much also makes it harder to lose the weight after delivery!

Still, everyone's target weight gain is different. This target is based on non-pregnancy weight. Talk with your doctor to learn what's best for you.

Suggested weight gain for pregnant women:

- Underweight: 28 to 40 pounds
- Average: 25 to 35 pounds
- Overweight: 15 to 25 pounds
- Multiple gestation pregnancy: May be higher

Source: webmd.com



B Is for Breakfast

Do you eat breakfast every day? You should! Studies show that people who eat breakfast are more likely to maintain a healthy weight and are more focused throughout the day. Fresh fruits, like bananas and oranges, and whole-grain bagels or muffins can be set aside or thrown in your bag for a quick bite on the go. Keep a box of low fat granola bars at work in case you forget to grab something on your way out the door.

Include a variety of food groups in your meal to keep your belly satisfied until lunchtime. Here are some more ideas:

- Apple slices with peanut butter
- Two hard-boiled eggs with whole-wheat toast and 8 oz. of orange juice
- Low fat yogurt and fresh berries
- Peanut butter on whole-wheat toast with 8 oz. of low fat milk
- Low fat granola cereal with sliced bananas and low fat milk
- A fruit smoothie with half of an avocado to make it extra thick

Your mother always said that breakfast was the most important meal of the day. Turns out, she's right.

Source: Mayoclinic.org

Protecting Our Daughters

Teens need routine health screenings and immunizations. The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is one of the immunizations that your daughter might need.

The vaccine was developed to protect young women from HPV, a sexually transmitted disease that can cause cervical cancer. Females between the ages of 11 and 26 are advised to be vaccinated.

Your daughter's doctor may recommend this vaccine, which consists of a series of three shots. The vaccine is most effective when females receive all three shots, so make sure your daughter gets each shot as her doctor recommends.

BlueChoice HealthPlan covers HPV vaccines at 100 percent after the office visit copayment.

HPV FAST FACT

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted disease in the United States. Because the virus is so common, it's recommended that females get the series of three vaccine shots early, before becoming sexually active.

For more information on HPV, visit our Web site at BlueChoiceSC.com. Under *Health & Wellness*, select *Women's Health* and then "Cervical cancer."



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