

# BENEFITS TOOLBOX



## HEALTH TIPS

# How to Talk to Your Doctor

## Be Your Doctor's Partner in Your Health Care

The single most important way you can stay healthy is to be an active member of your own health care team. Most doctor-patient relationships begin in the examining room when you visit the doctor's office with an illness or other health concern.

On average, doctors spend 19 minutes with each patient—often as little as 6 minutes per visit—so making the most of your time is important. When you communicate effectively with your doctor, you're using that precious time well.

Follow these four steps to

work with your doctor to make wise decisions about your care in the short time you have together.

**1 Be Clear When You Make Your Appointment.** Explain all of the health concerns you want to discuss with your doctor, so the office can schedule enough time for your appointment.

- Schedule another appointment if you need to discuss other health concerns that come up.

**2 Be Prepared for Your Office Visit.** Make sure you remember all the topics you want

## Inside This Issue

How to Talk to Your Doctor..... 1

New Plan Year Begins Oct. 1..... 1

Get Smart ..... 2

Keeping A Strong Beat..... 2

Are You Up-to-Date? ..... 3



to discuss by writing them down:

- Make a list of your symptoms.
- Write down your questions, with the most important ones first.
- Bring paper and a pen to take notes during the visit.

**3 Provide Information.** Don't wait to be asked for information. Be a full partner in your health care by telling your doctor everything you think he or she needs to know—even if it makes you feel embarrassed or uncomfortable.

- Keep a journal of your health information and take it to your doctor's appointments. Your health journal should include:
  - Health conditions you have (or have had in the past),

## HEALTHY REMINDERS

# New Plan Year Begins October 1

## Your Plan Choices Are Effective Until December 31, 2013

The benefit choices you made during this year's Open Enrollment period will become effective on October 1, 2012, and continue through December 31, 2013.

Starting next year, our Plan Year will be the same as the calendar year—January through December—making it much easier for everyone to keep track of annual deductibles and other annual limits and maximums.

The next opportunity to make changes to your benefit selections will be in late 2013, for the Plan Year beginning on January 1, 2014.

# Get Smart!

## Your Health Plan Offers Reliable Information Online

Being knowledgeable about your health conditions will help you make informed discussions about your treatment options with your physician. You have access to in-depth, reliable information on your Health Plan's website.

### REGENCE MEMBERS:

After you log in, click **My Advisor**, then **Health & Rx Guide**. Here's a sample of what you can do:

- **Search Drugs and Medications** to learn about prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, vitamins and supplements.
- **Choose an age** to learn about common health issues for children, teens and adults.
- **Search or browse for information** by selecting a topic or typing in a medication, symptom or condition.
- **Click the Health Encyclopedia** to view a multimedia (print, illustrations, video) introduction to virtually any health topic.
- **Read in-depth reports** on hundreds of topics, from arthritis to weight control.
- **Learn about alternative medicines** by browsing conditions, herbs, supplements and more.

### GROUP HEALTH MEMBERS:

Log in to **Member Services** or **MyGroupHealth**, choose **Health Information**, then **Health and Wellness Resources** or access the **Symptom Checker** on the **Group Health App** from your smart phone. Here's an overview:

- **Click Conditions, Diseases and Symptoms** and choose from hundreds of topics that matter to you.
- **Choose Healthy Living and Wellness** for valuable information that can help you lead a healthy lifestyle.

### HEALTH FOCUS

## Keeping a Strong Beat

### Learn How You Measure Up On Seven Heart-Health

How healthy is your heart? It might not be as strong as you think.

According to the American Heart Association (AHA), 94% of US adults are "poor" in at least one of the seven factors required for good cardiovascular health. Even worse, 38% of adults and 50% of children ages 12 to 19 only meet four (or fewer) of these health standards.

In the US alone, one in four people die from cardiovascular disease (CDV), which makes it the leading cause of death in our country. CDV includes conditions that involve narrowed or blocked blood vessels (for example, coronary artery disease, high blood pressure and high cholesterol), which can lead to a deadly heart attack or stroke.

It's easy to find out how healthy your heart is. The AHA offers a quick, confidential

assessment at [mylifecheck.heart.org](http://mylifecheck.heart.org). You'll get a personal heart score that shows where you stand on the seven recommended areas of focus and a customized action plan.

### Keep It Simple

Anyone can take small, simple steps to improve their heart health. When you keep taking these steps, they soon add up to improved overall heart health and a reduced risk of CDV. For example, try these simple steps:

**1 Quit smoking.** Learn about one of the many resources that can help you quit at [www.heart.org/quitsmoking](http://www.heart.org/quitsmoking).

**2 Lose weight.** Just for today, write down everything you eat and drink; add up the calories to see how you're doing.

**3 Get active.** Schedule a 30-minute walk this week.





## HEALTHY REMINDERS

# Are You Up-to-Date?

## Know How to Reduce Your Risks

You can reduce your risk for many serious diseases by staying up-to-date with vaccinations and getting tested when appropriate. Please check your Plan Booklet to find out how your Plan covers vaccinations, tests and treatment.

### WHOOPIING COUGH (PERTUSSIS)

**Overview:** Whooping cough spreads easily by coughing and sneezing and can cause serious illness, especially for babies and small children. It is at epidemic levels in Washington State this year.

**What It Is:** It starts like the common cold, with a runny nose, sneezing, mild cough and possibly fever. After 1–2 weeks, severe fits of coughing may begin (infants may not develop a cough at all). The illness is treated with antibiotics.

**Who Is At Risk:** It can be deadly for babies; more than half of infants who get the disease must be hospitalized and may develop pneumonia or slowed or stopped breathing.

**What You Can Do:** Everyone should be vaccinated to prevent the spread of the disease. Children under seven should get the series of DTaP vaccines. Children up to 10 who aren't fully vaccinated, and everyone 11 and older, should get the Tdap booster.

### SHINGLES

**Overview:** Almost 1 in 3 Americans will develop shingles during their lifetime. The risk increases with age.

**What It Is:** Shingles causes painful, blistering skin rashes that can last 2 to 4 weeks. Some people develop severe nerve pain or other complications that can last for months or years after the rash goes away.

**Who Is At Risk:** Anyone who has had chickenpox in the past can get shingles. Older adults are more likely to get the disease.

**What You Can Do:** People age 60 or older should get vaccinated, unless they have a weakened immune system.

### HEPATITIS C

**Overview:** People with Hepatitis C often have no symptoms and can live with an infection for decades without feeling sick.

**What It Is:** Hepatitis C is a liver disease that results from infection with the Hepatitis C virus. It can cause liver damage, cirrhosis, liver cancer and even death. It can be successfully treated with medication.

**Who Is At Risk:** Baby boomers born from 1945 through 1965 are five times more likely to have Hepatitis C.

**What You Can Do:** If you are in this age group, get a blood test, which will show if you have ever been infected by the Hepatitis C virus.

## Standards

**4 Eat better.** Eat three servings of fruit for snacks today.

**5 Control cholesterol.** Swap one food with a better choice today; for example, choose fish instead of steak.

**6 Manage blood pressure.** Get away from work for a 15-minute stress break to relax during your busy day.

**7 Reduce blood sugar.** Instead of a sugary soda, choose fresh fruit juice.

### Take a Step Right Now

You can stop heart disease before it even starts. Make one change today and then you're ready to make another. Before you know it, you will stop making poor choices and start making heart-healthy choices!



EPK & Associates  
15375 SE 30th Place, #380  
Bellevue, WA 98007

*Benefits Toolbox* provides general information about MBA Health Insurance Trust benefits. For more information, please refer to your benefit booklet. In the event of conflicting information, the Plan documents and insurance contracts will govern.

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR  
continued from page 1

- including illnesses, injuries, surgeries or hospitalizations
- Medicines, vitamins or supplements you take and how often you take them, as well as any allergies you have
- Your family health history
- A list of the health care providers you use
- Bring X-rays, tests results or medical records you have.

**4 Ask Questions.** If you don't ask, your doctor will logically assume you understand everything he or she tells you.

- Ask every time you don't understand something.

- If your doctor prescribes a medication, ask what it is called, what results you should expect, if there are possible side effects, how often to take it and if it is available as a generic.
- If your doctor recommends surgery or other treatment, ask about your risks, the cost and your other options.

**Follow Your Doctor's Advice**

If your doctor advises you to have lab tests or preventive tests done, see a specialist, or take any other action, do it. After all, if you're going to be a good partner, you have to do your part for your own good health.

