



Winter 2015/2016

Headed to the doctor?

Ask these three questions

Health care can be complex. A lot of people struggle to understand what they need to know.

But here's a way to make things easier. Every time you go to the doctor, be sure to ask—and understand the answers to—these three questions:

1. What is my main health problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is it important for me to do this?

Knowing this information will make it

easier for you to follow the treatment plan from your doctor. You'll be more likely to:

- Take your medicines the way you should.
- Get ready for a medical procedure.
- Get well sooner.
- Better manage a long-term health issue.
- Avoid a hospital visit.
- Keep your health costs down.

Source: National Patient Safety Foundation

Member alert: Renew your benefits today!

All Maryland Physicians Care (MPC) enrollees **must** renew their MPC benefits every year. Your benefits may be up for renewal today and if you do not renew them, you may lose your MPC benefits.

Don't risk losing your medical assistance benefits. For more information on how to renew your benefits, visit

www.marylandphysicianscare.com

and go to the "Become A Member" page.

Para obtener este boletín en español, póngase en contacto con Servicios para Miembros.

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Thank you for your input!

Thank you for responding to our member satisfaction survey.

Every year, Maryland Physicians Care (MPC) members are chosen to participate in a satisfaction survey. The members are surveyed through the mail and over the phone.

The purpose of the survey is to find out if members are satisfied with MPC's services. The results of the survey help MPC identify areas that we can improve for our members.

The general areas surveyed are:

- Satisfaction with personal doctor
- Satisfaction with specialists
- Satisfaction with all health care
- Satisfaction with health plan

If you are chosen, please complete the survey so that we are able to address your family's needs and provide better services.

For a copy of the most recent survey results, please visit our website at www.marylandphysicianscare.com.

Keep kids healthy

The Healthy Kids/Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) program is a wonderful program started by the state of Maryland. We offer this program for all young members from birth to age 21. Your child will have regular checkups and keep up-to-date on his or her shots. The doctor will check your child's growth and development, give some advice, and answer any questions you have.

Our plan has a network of doctors who specialize in treating children (pediatricians). If you need help finding a doctor for your child, just call Member Services at **1-800-953-8854**, (TDD/TTY **1-800-735-2258**). They'll be glad to help you.



Taking medication: Four tips to keep you safe

Medicine can do a lot to keep you well. But when you don't take it like you should, it can do harm.

Sometimes people take the wrong dose or the wrong drug. Other times, they stop taking medicine too soon. Or they might take two medicines together that shouldn't be mixed. It's easy to make mistakes.

The good news is that it's easy to prevent them too. Here are four things that can help:

1. **Ask questions.** Be sure you know when and how to take your medicine, what it will do for you, and if there are certain things you should avoid while taking it. Speak up any time something is unclear.
2. **Read labels.** Make sure the medicine you receive is what the doctor ordered and you're taking it correctly.
3. **Learn about side effects.** Know what problems to watch for—and what to do if they occur.
4. **Get a medicine checkup.** Take all the medicines you use to your doctor's office or pharmacy. Ask someone to go over them with you.

Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

Smoking dangers linger even after smokers leave

Smoking is bad for you. We know that.

Also bad: secondhand smoke. That's what nonsmokers breathe in when they are around other people who are lighting up.

But the danger doesn't end there. There's another way tobacco smoke can cause harm, especially for kids.

Some call it thirdhand smoke. It's what settles on surfaces in rooms where someone has been smoking.

It can stay around long after the smoker has left. Kids who crawl or play in the area can swallow this residue when they put items in their mouths. They can also breathe it in.

Either way, it's harmful.

Thirdhand smoke can cause a lot of problems, like:

- Asthma and other breathing troubles
- Learning disorders
- Cancer

To protect your kids, never allow smoking in your home. It's not safe even if you open a window or turn on a fan. If people must smoke, send them outside.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics

Want to quit smoking? Most smokers do. It's not always easy, but you—and those around you—will be better for it. Ask your doctor for help. You can also call MD Quitline at **1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)** or go to www.smokingstopshere.com.

Live well with a disability

When you're living with a disability, you may have some unique health challenges.

But in some ways, taking good care of yourself is no different for you than for anyone else. The same things that help keep most people healthy are likely to help you stay healthy as well.

Here are 10 tips that can help:

1. Get checkups. And be sure you talk with your health care provider about when to get screenings.
2. Always be honest with your health care team.
3. If you have questions or concerns about your health, let your provider know.
4. Make sure you know how to take your medicines.
5. Eat healthy foods in the right amounts.
6. Be active each day. Follow your provider's guidance.
7. Don't smoke or use drugs.
8. Know the risks of alcohol.
9. Don't get too much sun.
10. Stay in touch with family and friends.

What is case management?

Our Case Management Department is here to help you understand and control complex health conditions. Case managers and care coordinators can help Monday through Friday during normal business hours. A case manager may be assigned to help you plan for and receive health care services. The case manager also keeps track of what services are needed and what has been provided.

HealthChoice members with special needs may also qualify for case management, including:

- Children with special health care needs
- People with physical and/or developmental disabilities
- Pregnant and postpartum women (Baby Book program)
- People who qualify for our Small Miracles program
- People who are homeless
- People with HIV/AIDS
- People who need substance abuse treatment
- Children in state-supervised care

For more information about case management, call **1-410-401-9443** or toll-free **1-800-953-8854** (HealthChoice).

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Could it be asthma?

Common asthma symptoms include:

- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Chest tightness
- Shortness of breath

Not all people with asthma have the same symptoms. And having these symptoms doesn't always mean someone has the disease. If you think you have asthma, see your doctor.



What is a primary care provider?

Primary care providers (PCPs) give whole-person care. They're often physicians. But they can also be physician assistants or nurse practitioners.

You'll see your PCP for yearly checkups. So you'll get to know each other over time. That way you can get healthy living advice from someone you trust.

PCPs can also do annual women's health exams and prescribe birth control pills.

Aside from checkups, PCPs take care of a range of health

problems. They include:

- Allergies
- Asthma
- Sinus infections
- Stomach problems
- Acne and skin rashes
- High blood pressure
- Depression
- Sore throat and ear pain
- Simple sprains or bumps and bruises

Sometimes you'll need to see a specialist. In that case, your PCP will set it up for you. Having one person oversee your care is the best way to keep you healthy.

A good time to consider breast health

As of yet, there is no sure way to prevent breast cancer.

Even so, there are steps you can take to lower your risk.

One key step? Stay at a healthy body weight. This is even more important in midlife and later. Here's why:

After a woman's periods stop, most of her estrogen comes

from fat cells. Estrogen can spur the growth of many breast tumors. That's why too many pounds later in life could raise breast cancer risk. This seems to be especially true if those pounds end up on your waist.

There are a number of other steps you can take to help

prevent breast cancer. These include:

Avoid alcohol. Drinking can raise your risk of getting breast cancer. In fact, your risk goes up the more you drink.

Move more. Exercise may be able to help lower your risk. Try to get 150 minutes of moderate exercise or

75 minutes of vigorous exercise each week.

Know the risks of hormone therapy. There are risks and benefits of taking hormone therapy. Talk to your doctor to learn more.

Finding breast cancer early
Breast cancer can still develop even with the above safeguards. So be sure to talk to your doctor about when to have mammograms.

Regular mammograms can help find cancer in its early stages. Finding cancer early can help give you a head start on treatment.

Some women may have certain risk factors, such as very dense breasts. So you may need to talk with your doctor about additional screening tests, such as an MRI scan.

Source: American Cancer Society



Check up on your health

A little prevention goes a long way

Don't let illness sneak up on you. Keep an eye on your health, even when you feel fine. To help protect your health, have regular checkups with a doctor. And ask your doctor what screening tests are right for you.

These exams can help spot problems early. They might even prevent a problem from happening at all.

Know your history

Your doctor will want to know if your close family members had certain health problems. Did they have heart trouble, stroke, diabetes or cancer? Let your doctor know.

Also, tell your doctor about any changes in your own health. That includes: • New lumps • Skin changes • Pain • Dizziness • Sleep problems • Changes in eating or bathroom habits

Your doctor needs to know all these things.

Get screenings

Some of the tests your doctor might want you to have are those for:

- **Cholesterol.** At age 20, all healthy adults should have their cholesterol checked. Check it again every four to six years. High numbers mean a higher risk for heart disease.
- **Blood pressure.** Have it checked at least once every two years. High blood pressure raises risks of heart and kidney disease and stroke.
- **Diabetes.** Get screened for this disease if:
 - You have high blood pressure.
 - You take medicine for high blood pressure.
- **Colorectal cancer.** Most adults need this screening at age 50. Ask your doctor about the different types of tests.

Women: Ask your doctor about tests for: • Breast cancer • Cervical cancer • Osteoporosis

Men: Ask your doctor about the pros and cons of tests for prostate cancer. Also, are you between age 65 and 75, and have you ever been a smoker? If so, ask about getting screened for abdominal aortic aneurysm.

Sources: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; American Heart Association

Four steps to living well with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

You've been told you have COPD. You know this common lung disease can make everything you do more difficult. But that doesn't mean you have to give up on having a good life.

Many people with COPD live happy, productive lives. They do it by taking an active role in their health care. You can start to take control of your life and health with these four steps:

1. **Make an action plan.** With your health care provider, write down all the steps you need to take to stay healthy.
2. **Understand your COPD medicines.** Learn as much as you can about when to take them and why.
3. **Protect your health.** Be sure to get flu and pneumonia shots and all other preventive care.
4. **Eat right, exercise and reduce stress.** Talk with your provider to find out what is best for you.

Want to know more ways to take control of your health and well-being? Visit www.morehealth.org/copdlivingwell.

Source: American College of Chest Physicians

When COPD flares up, a few breathing methods can help. Try pursed-lip breathing. It helps you relax. It also brings oxygen into your lungs. Ask your health care provider to teach you this method.



Join MPC's Advisory Board

Maryland Physicians Care (MPC) is looking for members to be part of the Consumer Advisory Board. The board meets six times a year—three times in person and three times by phone—to discuss ways our members access MPC health care services and to help us come up with ways to make it easier. Tell us what you think.

Get involved

Be part of the solution by sharing your ideas. MPC will provide

lunch and assist with transportation to and from the board meetings.

All board members will receive an incentive for their participation in the meetings. Your voice can be heard. To learn more about how you can become a Consumer Advisory Board member, please call **1-800-953-8854**, then follow the prompts.

A healthier you can mean a healthier baby

When you're pregnant, the best way to take care of your baby is to take care of yourself.

Here are some important ways to keep yourself and your baby in good health.

See your doctor

Prenatal care is the care you receive during your pregnancy. During these visits, your doctor will:

- Talk with you about how to give your baby a healthy start in life
- Answer any questions you may have
- Check to make sure you and your baby are healthy

Checkups also give your doctor a chance to find and treat any problems early.

Eat right

To eat well during pregnancy: Choose good foods. Try to eat low-fat foods and plenty of:

- Fruits and vegetables.
- Whole grains.
- Protein.
- Foods with calcium. Smart choices include low-fat milk and yogurt.

Cook meat, eggs and fish all the way through, and avoid soft cheeses. This can help keep you from getting sick.

Don't eat certain kinds of fish. Some fish may contain high levels of mercury. This is a type of metal that could make you or your baby sick. It's best not to eat:

- Shark
- Swordfish
- King mackerel



Be active

Exercising when you're pregnant is good for you. It can:

- Help labor and delivery go more smoothly
- Make it easier to get back in shape after having your baby

Light exercises, such as walking or swimming, are usually best. Check with your

doctor about other kinds of exercise.

It's best not to do activities that involve jumping or quick stops and starts.

If you aren't already active, make sure to start slowly. Try not to do too much at once.

More healthy hints

Here are a few more tips to help you have a healthy pregnancy:

Find out how much weight to gain. For many women, 25 to 30 pounds is about right. You may need to gain more or less depending on what you weighed before pregnancy. Your doctor can tell you how much is OK for you. Just don't try to lose weight during pregnancy.

Get enough folic acid. To help prevent certain birth defects, you should get 400 to 800 micrograms of folic acid a day. Ask your doctor about taking a multivitamin or prenatal vitamin.

Also be sure to:

- Stay away from tobacco, alcohol and drugs. Ask your doctor how to quit if you need to.
- Talk to your provider about any medicines or supplements you take.
- Limit coffee and other drinks with caffeine to one or two cups a day.
- Have someone else change the litter box if you have a cat. This can help prevent toxoplasmosis. This is a disease that can seriously harm unborn babies.
- Talk to your doctor about getting shots you may need, including a flu shot.

Source: Office on Women's Health

How prior authorization works

Some health care services and medications may require prior authorization (PA). This is when your provider is requesting a service or drug that requires us to give our approval before you can get them. Your provider is responsible for getting the PA and cannot bill you when he or she fails to do so.

Once your provider submits the request, the PA Department has two business days (Monday through Friday) to deliver the decision. If more information is needed before a decision can be made, the PA Department will send a request to your provider. Your provider will have five calendar days to submit the information. The PA Department will deliver a decision based on the additional information within seven calendar days. If no more information is received, a decision is made (medical necessity) within seven calendar days.

Some drugs may be prescribed only in limited quantities or dosages. To override a quantity limit, your provider must complete a PA form.

Staying well

Five ways to prevent a return trip to the hospital

Staying in the hospital is probably not your idea of a good time. And after you go home, chances are you don't want to go back. Try these tips for staying healthy after a hospital stay.

1. **Make sure you understand your condition.** Ask:
 - What you should do to help yourself get better
 - What you should avoid doing
 - What problems you should watch for
 - What to do if problems occur
2. **Review your medicine.** Ask if you should keep taking the medicines you did before your hospital stay. You may need new

medicines too. Be sure you know what they do and how to take them.

3. **Go to all your follow-up visits.** These might be set up before you leave the hospital. It's important that you keep them. They help track your progress and keep you well.

4. **Speak up if you need help.** Can you bathe and dress yourself and cook your meals? If you have concerns about your ability to handle these and other tasks, don't hesitate to say so. We can arrange to get you some help.

If you're worried about things like paying for medications or getting to your doctor visits, mention that as well.

5. **Get a name and number.** You may have questions after leaving the hospital. Be sure you're clear about who to call for answers.



What is a specialist?

A specialist (or specialty care provider) is a doctor who has completed advanced education and clinical training in a specific area of medicine (their specialty area), like the heart, bones or brain. Specialty care is the health care services provided by the specialist.

Some special health care needs may require that a patient see a specialist. Although a written referral form is not required for a member to visit a specialist, it is important that the primary care provider (PCP) knows about all of the specialists their patients are seeing. A PCP can coordinate all specialty services and document them in the member's chart. Upon completion of the visit, the specialist is required to send a copy of the medical notes to the member's PCP. The specialist and the PCP then work together to keep patients healthy.

If you have any questions, please call Maryland Physicians Care's Member Services Department at **1-800-953-8854**.

Nurse Help Line

Your personal Nurse Help Line provides help and information 24 hours a day, every day of the year. This service is at

no cost to you. Call Member Services at **1-800-953-8854** and follow the prompts for the Member Services department, then press the option for the Nurse Help Line. You can call

anytime you or a member of your family is sick, hurt or needs medical advice. You can also ask questions about your health or medicine.

Help stop fraud

Please remember: It is everyone's responsibility (a requirement that can be subject to federal or state sanctions) to report suspected fraud or abuse.

To report fraud or abuse, call the Maryland Physicians Care (MPC) compliance hotline at **1-866-781-6403**. We prefer, but do not require, that you leave your name.

Please leave enough information to help us investigate, including the:

- Name of the MPC member or provider you suspect of fraud
- Member's MPC card number
- Name of the doctor, hospital or other health care provider
- Date of service
- Amount of money that MPC paid for the service
- Description of the acts you suspect involve fraud or abuse

You can also visit MPC's website at **www.marylandphysicianscare.com**. Click on "Fraud & Abuse," and you can email us suspected fraud information. Either way, it's really important that we hear from you.

Thanks for your continued support!

Sincerely,

MPC Compliance Department

Who to call

Member Services (benefits, ID cards, appeals, PCP changes, etc.)
1-800-953-8854

DentaQuest (adults only)
1-800-685-1150

Healthy Smiles Dental Services
1-888-696-9596

Public Mental Health Services
1-800-888-1965

Utilization Management (UM)
1-800-953-8854—follow the prompts to UM

Superior Vision
1-800-428-8789

HEDIS Outreach
1-866-651-7838

Case Management/Disease Management

1-800-953-8854

1-401-401-9443

Is there a health topic you would like to see discussed in our member newsletter?

Would you like to offer feedback or recommendations on current or new member education programs? Would you like to learn more about a health topic? If so, we would love to hear from you! Please give us a call at **1-800-953-8854** and follow the prompts to the Prevention and Wellness Department.



Learn more online!

Looking for ways to stay healthy? Go to **www.marylandphysicianscare.com** to learn more about proven care and health care options. You can use online tools to help you manage your health. You will also find more on programs or classes in your area. If available, discounts on memberships or services are just a few clicks away.

Visit our website

Find information on:

- Quality Improvement Program
- Case Management Program
- Disease Management Program

- Clinical practice guidelines
- Utilization management
- Pharmacy/prescription drug management
- Benefits and coverage
- Member rights and responsibilities
- Member Handbook

- Provider directory
- Protected health information use and disclosure

If you do not have Internet service, you can reach us by phone (numbers listed at top right) for more information.

Your Family's Health is published as a community service for the friends of **Maryland Physicians Care**, 509 Progress Drive, Suite 117, Linthicum, MD 21090-2256, **www.marylandphysicianscare.com**

This is general health information and should not replace the advice or care you get from your provider. Always ask your provider about your own health care needs. The plan does not provide health care services; you must receive health care services from your provider.

Models may be used in photos and illustrations.

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