

your

# HEALTH

VOLUME XV, ISSUE IV  
WINTER 2011

**PRIORITY**  
partners

# matters

A NEWSLETTER BROUGHT TO YOU BY PRIORITY PARTNERS MANAGED CARE ORGANIZATION

## Healthy Transition to Winter

As temperatures drop, the days get shorter and the weather can get bad. Moving into the colder months can be challenging. Studies show that people's moods can change based on the season. During the winter months, you can't do certain outdoor activities because of weather conditions. However, there are ways to remain healthy and happy when it gets cold.

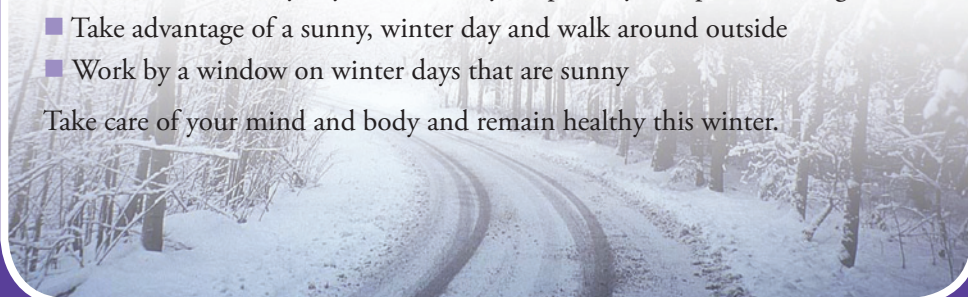
Exercising is a healthy practice for your mind and body. Just because it's cold outside doesn't mean you can't exercise. There are many indoor options to remain active that include:

- Creating a home gym, which can include a set of dumbbells, an exercise ball or a jump rope
- Joining a local gym or YMCA
- Walking around indoors at a mall
- Walking up and down steps for 20 minutes at time
- Working out using exercise DVDs

Winter brings about changes that can affect your mood as well. When Daylight Savings Time ends late in the fall, the days get shorter, leaving less time to enjoy sunlight. For some people, the time change and lack of sunlight affects their sleep and/or energy level. Some helpful tips to deal with the changes winter brings are:

- Drink plenty of water
- Continue to exercise
- Take a vitamin every day (check with your primary care provider for guidance)
- Take advantage of a sunny, winter day and walk around outside
- Work by a window on winter days that are sunny

Take care of your mind and body and remain healthy this winter.



## Protect Your Family

Carbon Monoxide is a deadly, colorless, gas that you can't see, smell or taste. You can get carbon monoxide poisoning when the gas, which is toxic, is released into an unvented area.

There are ways to protect your family from carbon monoxide poisoning.

You should never:

- Sit in a car in a garage with the engine running even if the garage door is up
- Sleep in a room with a kerosene space heater
- Use a gas oven to heat your home
- Use a charcoal, electric or gas grill inside
- Use gasoline-powered engines such as chainsaws, mowers or generators in unvented spaces

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are headache, dizziness, nausea, mental confusion or trouble breathing. If you think you may have carbon monoxide poisoning get fresh air right away and go to



an urgent care center or your primary care provider.

Be sure to buy carbon monoxide detectors for your home. Follow these tips and others found at <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/466.html> can save your life.

**Priority Partners ranked first in the State of Maryland among Medicaid health plans in Consumer Reports' national health plan rankings. The plan was ranked 33rd nationwide.**

# Praise For Priority Partners

## Flor Aguilar-Orellann



Flor Aguilar-Orellann wasn't pleased with the first doctor who she had when her children were born. She was specifically unhappy that her children's required shots had not been given. Shortly after her youngest son was born, she was finally ready for a change.

With two young children, receiving the proper health care is very important to Flor. But Flor, a native of El Salvador, felt like she didn't have as many doctors to choose from.

One of the benefits of being a Priority Partners member is the interpreter services. Olivia Utrera is the interpreter for Frederick County where Flor lives. Interpreters set up appointments and attend them to make sure members understand all that is being said. With Olivia's help, Flor now feels comfortable with her doctor.

"One of the most important things for me is my kids' wellness. I feel good about Priority Partners and the doctors that I have. I am very satisfied," Flor said.

## Marcia Merriman



A day before Mother's Day 2011, Paul Merriman, 17, was riding his bike to a friend's house. Paul fell off his bike. Afterwards, he called his parents to let them know what had happened.

When his parents came to get him, Paul had a few scrapes, but no signs of a serious injury, said his mother, Marcia Merriman. But once he got home, Paul's head began to hurt really bad.

Paul was rushed to Johns Hopkins Hospital by ambulance. The medical staff treated Paul right away, stabilizing his condition. He was suffering from blood on his brain. Paul could've died had the injuries gone untreated for another 12 to 20 minutes, according to his mother.

Today, Paul is doing well. It is as if he never had a serious brain injury.

"Being a Priority Partners member has meant life to my son. I can trust the quality of care we will get with Priority Partners. Other insurances don't compare to Priority Partners. Johns Hopkins is amazing," Marcia said.

## Martha Lopez



When Martha Lopez brought her baby son Marcello home from the hospital in January, she was hoping for the best.

Unfortunately, Marcello got sick the next month and had to go back to the hospital. When the test results came back, doctors found that Marcello had Mucopolysaccharidosis II, a genetic disorder.

Kathryn Darby, Martha's case manager, has been helping coordinate services for Marcello and his family. Currently, Marcello receives hospice home care. A nurse comes to the Lopez home twice a week to check Marcello's heart, lungs and temperature. In addition, Martha takes Marcello to see four specialists. Also, Marcello is on six different medications and medical supplies and equipment are provided.

Anything Martha needs for Marcello's care, Kathryn sets it up.

"Priority Partners has been a great help with the care provided for Marcello," Martha said. "I can't say that I could take care of Marcello without Priority Partners."



Deidra Brooks, a registered nurse from Progressive Nursing Staffers, gives Douglas Lane a flu shot.

## Pharmacy Corner: Flu Shots Available

Priority Partners members 18 and older can receive a flu shot at several community pharmacies. Best of all, it's free at participating network pharmacies. Flu shots are especially important for health care workers, young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions and people 65 and older. Find a pharmacy close to you. A list of pharmacies is available at [http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/priority\\_partners/members\\_visitors/healthchoice/benefits/flu.html](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/priority_partners/members_visitors/healthchoice/benefits/flu.html).

# Quality Matters

## SPECIAL INSERT



Johns Hopkins HealthCare ■ [www.jhhc.com](http://www.jhhc.com)

Priority Partners ■ [www.ppmco.org](http://www.ppmco.org)

### Quality Improvement

The Priority Partners Quality Improvement Program focuses on improving the quality of care and services delivered to our members, network providers and purchasers. You can obtain more information about our progress in meeting improvement goals or our programs by calling 800-654-9728. Or you can access that information from one of the two websites listed above. Reference the website or your member newsletter throughout the year for updates on various measures, such as member satisfaction surveys and monitoring the quality of care you receive.

### Care Management Programs and How to Self-Refer

The Care Management team has a variety of programs to help Priority Partners members manage chronic health conditions, recover from serious illness and make healthy lifestyle changes. Our Care Management services are voluntary and are provided at no cost to the member. Members identified with certain needs may be automatically enrolled, but are under no obligation to participate in these programs. Details regarding the programs are located on each of our websites.

If you have questions about the programs, or believe you or a loved one would benefit from these services, call 410-762-5206 or toll free at 800-557-6916. We are available Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Any voicemail messages received after normal business hours will be addressed the following business day. We can also be contacted via e-mail at [populationhealth@jhhc.com](mailto:populationhealth@jhhc.com).

### Utilization Management

The aim of the Priority Partners Utilization Management Program is to ensure that members receive the right care at the right time in the right setting. Priority Partners' utilization management decisions are based on appropriate care and existence of coverage. Priority Partners does not have financial incentives for staff that reward denials or promotes under-utilization of services. If you would like to reach a utilization management representative, please call 410-424-4480 or 800-261-2461 with your request.

## We Respect Your Private Health Information

Priority Partners wants you to know how we maintain the privacy of your private health information. We outline how we do that in a document called a “Notice of Privacy Practices.” It can be accessed on the Priority Partners website under the member section. If you would like a paper copy, call Priority Partners Customer Service at 800-654-9728.

## Handbook Information

In case you missed it, a wealth of information about how to use your health benefit plan can be found in your member handbook, which is mailed to you after your enrollment. If you’ve misplaced the handbook, the same information can be located on the Priority Partners website under the member section. It includes:

- How to access care and obtain primary care services
- Benefits and services included and excluded from your coverage
- Information about your financial responsibilities for health care services
- Information about coverage and how to obtain care when out of the service area
- Prescription plan and pharmacy information
- How to submit a claim if you receive a bill you don’t think you have to pay
- Your rights and responsibilities as a health plan member
- Information about our network providers, including their qualifications
- How to obtain care after normal office hours
- How to obtain care from a specialist, mental health and substance abuse providers or a hospital
- How to pay us a compliment, submit a complaint, or request a review of an adverse decision
- What to do if you think the situation is a medical emergency
- How to obtain assistance if your primary language is not English
- How you can express your wishes in an Advance Directive
- How Priority Partners evaluates new medical treatments to determine whether or not they should be covered

The member handbook has a fresh new look and is packed with vital information. To view the handbook, just log onto the website, and click on the member tab. If you would like a paper copy of the handbook, call Customer Service at 800-654-9728.

This notice describes how medical information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information. Please review carefully.

## Safeguarding Your Protected Health Information

Priority Partners Managed Care Organization (PPMCO) is committed to protecting your health information. In order to provide treatment or to pay for your health care, PPMCO will ask for certain health information and that health information will be put into your record. The record usually contains your symptoms, examination and test results, diagnoses, and treatment. That information, referred to as your health or medical record, is legally regulated as health information, and may be used for a variety of purposes. PPMCO is required to follow the privacy practices described in this Notice, although PPMCO reserves the right to change our privacy practices the terms of this Notice at any time. You may request a copy of the new notice from PPMCO Customer Service at 800-654-9728.

## How PPMCO May Use and Disclose Your Protected Health Information

The PPMCO workforce will only use your health information when doing their jobs. For uses beyond what PPMCO normally does, PPMCO must have your written authorization unless the law permits or requires it. The following are some examples of our possible uses and disclosures of your health information.

### Uses and Disclosures Relating to Treatment, Payment, or Health Care Operations:

- **For treatment:** PPMCO may use or share your health information to approve, deny treatment and to determine if your medical treatment is appropriate. For example, PPMCO health care providers may need to review your treatment plan with your health care provider for medical necessity or for coordination of care.
- **To obtain payment:** PPMCO may use and share your health information in order to bill and collect payment for your health care services and to determine your eligibility to participate in our services. For example, your health care provider may send claims for payment of medical services provided to you.
- **For health care operations:** PPMCO may use and share your health information to evaluate the quality of services provided, or to our state or federal auditors and regulators.

### Other Uses and Disclosures of Health Information Required or Allowed by Law:

- **Information purposes:** Unless you provide us with alternative instructions, PPMCO may send appointment reminders and other materials about the program to your home.
- **Required by law:** PPMCO may disclose health information when a law requires us to do so.
- **Public health activities:** PPMCO may disclose health information when PPMCO is required to collect or report information about disease or injury, or to report vital statistics to other divisions in the department and other public health authorities.
- **Health oversight activities:** PPMCO may disclose your health information to the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and other agencies for oversight activities required by law. Examples of these oversight activities are audits, inspections, investigations, accreditations, and licensure.
- **Coroners, Medical Examiners, Funeral Directors and Organ Donations:** PPMCO may disclose health information relating to a death to coroners, medical examiners or funeral directors, and to authorized organizations relating to organ, eye, or tissue procurement, donations or transplants.
- **Research purposes:** In certain circumstances, and under supervision of an Institutional Review Board or other designated privacy board, PPMCO may disclose health information to assist medical research.
- **Avert threat to health or safety:** In order to avoid a serious threat to health or safety, PPMCO may disclose health information as necessary to law enforcement or other persons who can reasonably prevent or lessen the threat of harm.
- **Abuse and Neglect:** PPMCO will disclose your health information to appropriate authorities if we reasonably believe that you are a possible victim of abuse, neglect, domestic violence, or some other crime. PPMCO may disclose your health information to the extent necessary to avert a serious threat to your health or safety or the health or safety of others.

## Notice of Privacy Practices

- **Specific government functions:** PPMCO may disclose health information of military personnel and veterans in certain situations, to correctional facilities in certain situations, to government benefit programs relating to eligibility and enrollment, and for national security reasons, such as protection of the President.
- **Families, friends or others involved in your care:** Unless you say no, PPMCO may share your health information with people as it is directly related to their involvement in your care. PPMCO may share your health information if related to payment of your care. Unless you say no, PPMCO may also share health information with people to notify them about your location, general condition, or death.
- **Workers Compensation:** PPMCO may disclose health information to worker's compensation programs that provide benefits for work-related injuries or illnesses without regard to fault.
- **Lawsuits, Disputes and Claims:** If you are involved in a lawsuit, a dispute, or a claim, PPMCO may disclose your health information in response to a court or administrative order, subpoena, discovery request, investigation of a claim filed on your behalf, or other lawful process.
- **Law Enforcement:** PPMCO may disclose your health information to a law enforcement official for purposes that are required by law or in response to a subpoena.

### You Have a Right To:

- **Request restrictions:** You have a right to request a restriction or limitation on the health information PPMCO uses or discloses about you. PPMCO will accommodate your request if possible, but is not legally required to agree to the requested restriction. If PPMCO agrees to a restriction, PPMCO will follow it except in emergency situations.
- **Request Confidential Communications:** You have the right to ask that PPMCO send you information at an alternative address or by alternative means. PPMCO must agree to your request as long as it is reasonably easy for us to do so.
- **Inspect and copy:** You have a right to see your health information upon your written request. If you want copies of your health information, you may be charged a fee for copying, depending on your circumstances. You have a right to choose what portions of your information you want copied and to have prior information on the cost of copying.
- **Request amendment:** You may request in writing that PPMCO correct or add to your health record. PPMCO may deny the request if PPMCO determines that the health information is: (1) incorrect or incomplete; (2) not part of our records; or (3) not permitted to be disclosed. If you request an amendment to records that we did not create, we will consider your request only if the creator of the records is unavailable. If PPMCO approves the request for amendment, PPMCO will amend the health information and inform you, and will tell others that need to know about the amendment in the health information.
- **Accounting of disclosures:** You have a right to request a list of the disclosures made of your health information after April 14, 2003. Exceptions are health information that has been used for treatment, payment, and operations. In addition, PPMCO does not have to list disclosures made to you, made in connection with a permitted use or disclosure, based on your written authorization, made to your family, friends or others involved in your care, provided for national security, made to law enforcement officials or correctional facilities, or made as part of a "limited data set" (where all but a few identifiers are removed). There will be no charge for up to one such list each year.
- **Notice:** You have the right to receive a paper copy of this Notice and/or an electronic copy by email upon request.

### For More Information

This document is available in other languages and alternate formats that meet the guidelines for the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you have questions and would like more information, you may contact PPMCO Compliance Division at 800-654-9728.

## To Report a Problem About Our Privacy Practices

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint.

- You can file a complaint with the PPMCO Complaint Division by calling 800-654-9728, or by writing to:  
Priority Partners MCO  
6704 Curtis Court  
Glen Burnie MD 21060
- You can file a complaint with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Civil Rights. You may call PPMCO for the contact information.

PPMCO will take no retaliatory action against you if you make such complaints.  
Effective Date: This notice is effective on April 14, 2003.



# Winter Safety for Pregnant Women

With winter right around the corner, pregnant women have to make sure to keep themselves and their unborn babies safe. When you are pregnant, your system, which helps to fight off germs, is weaker. Therefore, you will have an increased risk of becoming sick. It is very important for you to get the flu shot, to protect yourself. Also, the flu shot helps protect your unborn baby from getting the flu until he or she is about six months old.

During the winter months, before you go outside it is important to dress in layers, wearing a hat, gloves and a scarf. Wear shoes or boots that will prevent you from slipping on ice or snow. If you have been active in the earlier months of your pregnancy, then most winter sports and activities can be enjoyed. Avoid getting overheated or overdoing your activities. Also, be sure to drink extra fluids when exercising. Winter activities that should be avoided by pregnant women are downhill skiing, ice hockey, sledding or any other activities that could cause injury to your pregnant belly. Before trying a new sport or activity, check with your OB doctor.

In addition, during the colder months, you may experience depression symptoms known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) due to your pregnancy hormones. SAD is thought to be caused due to a decrease in the amount of daylight. Signs of depression can be avoiding friends and family; difficulty sleeping; lack of desire to eat or perform daily hygiene; and/or loss of interest in daily activities. If any of the symptoms occur for more than seven days in a row, call your OB doctor. You may also call Priority Partners Behavioral Health line at 800-261-2429.



## Pregnancy Corner

### QUESTIONS?

If you have questions, or would like more information about your Priority Partners benefits, please call one of the numbers below:

**Customer Service**  
800-654-9728

**Outreach**  
888-500-8786

**Health Education**  
800-957-9760

**Mental Health Services**  
800-888-1965

**Substance Abuse Services**  
800-261-2429

**Vision Benefits**  
800-428-8789

**DentaQuest Benefits**  
(formerly called  
**Doral Dental**)  
888-696-9596

**Priority Partners Website**  
[www.ppmco.org](http://www.ppmco.org)

*For a copy of*  
**Your Health Matters**  
*in Spanish,*  
call 800-654-9728

## Partners With Mom Program

The Partners With Mom Program is offering a healthy lifestyle weight management program. It is designed for Priority Partners prenatal members with a Body Mass Index (BMI) greater than or equal to 30, or a BMI less than or equal to 18.5. The Program provides prenatal and postpartum lifestyle management skills for members up to six months after delivering a newborn baby. Pregnant members with a chronic health condition are teamed with a PWM case manager, and a health educator or health coach. However, pregnant members who just need help with reaching healthier lifestyle goals are teamed with a health educator or health coach. Through lifestyle management skills, the members learn about the importance of maintaining a healthy weight, which can improve existing health conditions. The goal is to help new mothers have a healthy pregnancy and baby.

Members are identified by either a Maryland Prenatal Risk Assessment



through the state, the Priority Partners Outreach Department, or a case manager. The health educator or health coach provides monthly one-on-one health education/health coaching techniques to these members. An action plan, health education materials, and educational tools are provided to each member in the program to assist with developing healthy lifestyle management skills.



# Is It Time to Re-apply? Be Sure to Continue Your Health Benefits

If it's time for you to renew your Priority Partners health care coverage, and you need help with your redetermination forms, visit Chrissy, our member advocate. Chrissy will be at the locations listed below from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. She can answer your questions and help you fill out your forms, at no cost. Chrissy can also be reached by phone at 410-502-8406. *See you soon!*

**Three Lower Counties** December 13, 2011  
January 10, 2012  
1665 Woodbrooke Dr.  
Salisbury, MD 21804

**Choptank Community Health System** December 27, 2011  
January 24, 2012  
609 Daffin Lane  
Denton, MD 21629

**Community Clinic Inc** January 4, 2012  
200 Girard St., Suite 212  
Gaithersburg, MD 20877

**Community Clinic Inc** January 20, 2012  
7676 New Hampshire Ave.  
Suite 220  
Takoma Park, MD 20912

**People's Community Health Center** January 12, 2012  
Greenmount Avenue Center  
3028 Greenmount Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21218

**People's Community Health Center** December 29, 2011  
January 26, 2012  
1370 Odenton Road  
Odenton, MD 21113

**People's Community Health Center** January 3, 2012  
Anne Arundel  
5517 Ritchie Highway  
Baltimore, MD 21225

**Chase Brexton** January 6, 2012  
1001 Cathedral Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201

**Greater Baden** December 21, 2011  
January 18, 2012  
7450 Albert Road  
Brandywine, MD 20615

**Greater Baden** December 20, 2011  
January 17, 2012  
5001 Silver Hill Road  
2nd Floor  
Suitland, MD 20746

**More dates and locations are coming. Visit [www.ppmco.org](http://www.ppmco.org) to learn more.**

If you have questions regarding fraud or suspected fraudulent activities involving a Priority Partners member, provider or employee, contact the Corporate Compliance Department at 410-424-4996 or by email at [compliance@jhhc.com](mailto:compliance@jhhc.com).

**PRIORITY** partners  
6704 Curtis Court  
Glen Burnie, MD 21060

**WINTER**  
**VEGETABLES**  
**SOAP**  
**SNOW**  
**SHOVEL**  
**SEASON**  
**MOOD**  
**HEALTH**  
**GERMS**  
**FRUIT**  
**FLU**  
**FIBER**  
**FALL**  
**EXERCISE**  
**ENERGY**  
**COLD**

X R E O J K I J H O W X P D  
Y L S S E W D L O C H F A F  
R J I V E M S M O O D T O I  
M H C T F L Q T I U R F S B  
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**Kid's Page**  
**Puzzle**  
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