Flu Prevention: Get the Flu Shot

With the arrival of flu season, it is time to focus on flu prevention. The flu is an infectious, respiratory disease caused by a virus. Common symptoms of the flu are chills, fever, sore throat, muscle pain, severe headache, coughing, fatigue and general discomfort.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone six months and older receive the flu shot. It is especially important for people at high risk of flu complications. The flu shot is free to all members, and has been approved for people older than six months. This includes healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions.

The flu shot for 2010-2011 will guard against the 2009 H1N1, H3N2, and the influenza B virus. Annual flu shots should start in September, or as soon as available, and continue throughout flu season into the following calendar year. Flu outbreaks begin as early as October, but more cases occur in January or later.

Who should get the flu shot?
- Pregnant women
- Children younger than 5, especially under 2, but over six months
- People 50 years of age or older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- People living in nursing homes or long-term care facilities
- People living with or caring for persons at high risk for complications from the flu
- Health care workers

Who should not get the flu shot?
- People who are severely allergic to chicken eggs
- People who have had a severe reaction to a flu shot
- People who have developed Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS)
- Children less than 6 months old
- People who have a moderate-to-severe illness with a fever

Talk to your provider today about making an appointment for your flu shot. For more information on the flu and flu shots, visit www.cdc.gov/flu.

Flu Shot Locations

Did you know that you can receive the flu shot at a pharmacy near you? Priority Partners members age 18 or older can receive the flu shot for no cost at select community pharmacies this fall. This convenient option lets you get a flu shot even if you can't make it to your provider’s office. And best of all, it's free! Check the list of participating pharmacies on the Priority Partners website to find a pharmacy in your neighborhood.

Find us on Facebook!

By becoming a Priority Partners Facebook fan you will receive updates daily on things like benefits, health tips for you and your family and other important reminders. To become a fan: visit our website, www.ppmco.org, and click on Follow Us on Facebook on the right panel.
Passion and Teamwork, Larry Crawford’s Story

In life, Larry N. Crawford has been knocked down several times. But he has been determined to never stay down for the count.

Larry, a seven-year Priority Partners member, has endured homelessness. He was infected with HIV/AIDS through a blood transfusion and he also lost his left leg, a finger and the shin bones in his right leg to an infection. However, Larry has overcome hurdles to become self sufficient and is now focusing on his passion … helping others.

“Larry is my hero. He’s been through tremendous obstacles from the day he was born,” said Larry’s case manager, Carolyn Ross-Friend. “He doesn’t let obstacles get in his way. Instead, he uses them for his own growth. He’s really motivated and has found his passion. He has encouraged me.”

Carolyn has worked with Larry for four years. As a case manager, Carolyn is responsible for helping clients become self sufficient. She coordinates care and services, removes barriers from getting proper care and is an advocate for her clients. Additionally, she is responsible for educating clients about their illnesses.

Obstacles and challenges have been plentiful. Larry, who is wheelchair bound, missed a lot of appointments due to transportation issues. Eventually, Carolyn arranged regular transportation. She also made sure he received three meals a day through Movable Feast.

Following a 17-month hospital stay, Larry not only lost his livelihood, but his home as well. According to Larry, one of Carolyn’s biggest contributions was helping him to regain a roof over his head. She was instrumental in finding Larry shelter and eventually in helping him secure a spot at Project PLASE. Project PLASE provides traditional housing and supportive services to the most vulnerable and underserved homeless adults. Today, Larry has a place to call his own after moving into an apartment in September. Carolyn credits Larry with overcoming adversity. However, Larry sees it differently.

“I look at it as if I have a team,” Larry said. “I’ve achieved a lot of goals; things that a year ago I would have never told you I could do.”

Despite Larry’s struggles, he is motivated to turn negatives into positives. He truly cares about making an impact on the lives of those living with HIV/AIDS. He recently completed training through the Leadership Empowerment and Advocacy Program (LEAP). The program certifies Larry to counsel and test people with HIV/AIDS. He also volunteers with organizations that support underprivileged individuals living with or who are at risk of HIV/AIDS or other disabilities.

“If I can affect change in anybody’s life, even if it’s just one person, then I think I’ve done what I set out to do,” Larry said.

Pharmacy Corner: Medication Dosage for Your Child

It is important to read the label before giving medication(s) to a child. Medications that the doctor prescribes should have instructions clearly printed on the pharmacy container. For over-the-counter medications, read the drug facts on the outside of the package. Make sure the medication is safe for your child and be sure to find out the correct dosage.

Always use the dosage prescribed by your child’s doctor. Use the dosing tool that comes with the medication, such as a dropper or a dosing cup. Different dosing tools, or a kitchen spoon, may not hold the right amount.

The number of doses your child needs each day is printed on the outside of the medication bottle. If necessary, set an alarm as a reminder. Don’t skip doses or stop the medication too soon. Finish all of the prescribed medicine (especially antibiotics), even if your child begins to feel better.

Remember, just because medications are safe for adults doesn’t mean it is safe for children. If you are unsure about anything regarding your child’s medications, ask your doctor or pharmacist.
Preventing the Flu During Pregnancy

Pregnant women are at greater risk for getting the flu and other related illnesses. During pregnancy, your immune system weakens. Therefore, using proper precautions is critical in protecting yourself and your baby from the flu.

The best way to prevent the seasonal flu is by getting the flu shot. It is safe for expectant mothers to get the flu shot at any stage of pregnancy. Almost all women who become pregnant during flu season (November through March) should receive a flu shot.

This year, there is only one flu shot that will protect against the three different flu viruses. If you are allergic to eggs, you should not get the flu shot because egg products are used to make the vaccine. In addition, the flu shot is safe while breast-feeding. It cannot cause you or your nursing baby to get sick. However, pregnant women should avoid the nasal flu mist vaccine. It is not approved for pregnant women.

Additionally, protect yourself. Keep your distance from others who are sick. Try to avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that has germs on it and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Consistently wash your hands to help protect from germs.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. If you do not have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve. Do not use your hands. Finally, stay home when you are sick. This helps prevent others from catching your illness.

Call your health care provider if you think you have the flu. Get plenty of rest, and drink lots of fluids. Avoid using over-the-counter cold and flu medications, herbal products or dietary supplements without first talking to your health care provider. Not all over-the-counter medications are safe to take during pregnancy.

For more consumer information, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov, or call 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).

Monitoring Your Health

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and it’s time to think about your health. What grade would you receive when it comes to your health? Would you receive a passing or failing grade?

Take care of your health by getting a breast exam and a pelvic exam.

Earn a passing grade by talking to your health care provider about these tests. Set up your appointment today. If you need assistance, please call the Priority Partner’s Outreach Department at 888-500-8786.

Remember to get:

- an X-ray of your breasts (mammogram) every year starting at age 40
- a breast exam by your provider every one to three years (if under 40)
- a regular pap smear

Get a passing grade. Make an appointment for a screening that may save your life.

Priority Partners offers several programs to help you with your pregnancy. If you have any questions, please contact us at 410-762-5215, or toll-free at 800-261-2396, ext. 5215.

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

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

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Child Anxiety Prevention Study
Point of Contact:
Golda Ginsburg, Ph.D
443-287-4349 CAPs@jhmi.edu

Older Adults & Caregivers:
Multiple Medical Conditions in the Elderly
Point of Contact:
Travonia Hughes, Ph.D
410-550-5829 thughel17@jhmi.edu

Prevention/Slowing of Diabetic Neuropathy and Treatment of Pain in Diabetic Neuropathy
Point of Contact:
Nicolas Cimino
443-287-0589 ncimino1@jhmi.edu

While Johns Hopkins HealthCare (JHHC) encourages the support of, and participation in medical research generally, JHHC makes no recommendation about participation in any specific research project. Before agreeing to participate in any research projects, ask questions and investigate to reach your own conclusion.
It’s Time to Re-apply: Don’t Lose Your Health Benefits

It’s time for you to renew your Priority Partners health care coverage and if you need help with your redetermination forms, visit our member advocate, Chrissy Calendar. Chrissy will be at the locations listed below. She can answer your questions and help you fill out your forms, at no cost to you. See you soon!

Baltimore Medical System
3700 Fleet Street, Suite 200
Baltimore, MD 21224
Oct. 22, 2010
Nov. 26, 2010
Dec. 24, 2010
Jan. 28, 2011

Baltimore Medical System
3120 Erdman Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21213
Oct. 18, 2010
Nov. 15, 2010
Dec. 20, 2010
Jan. 17, 2011

Three Lower Counties
1104 Healthway Drive
Salisbury, MD 21804
Nov. 9, 2010
Dec. 14, 2010
Jan. 11, 2011

Three Lower Counties
1665 Woodbrooke Drive
Salisbury, MD 21804
Oct. 12, 2010

Choptank Community Health System
609 Daffin Lane
Denton, MD 21629
Oct. 26, 2010
Nov. 23, 2010
Dec. 28, 2010
Jan. 25, 2011

Community Clinic Inc
200 Girard Street, Suite 212
Gaithersburg, MD 20877
Nov. 3, 2010
Dec. 1, 2010
Jan. 5, 2011

Community Clinic Inc
7676 New Hampshire Avenue
Takoma Park, MD 20912
Oct. 15, 2010
Nov. 19, 2010
Dec. 17, 2010
Jan. 21, 2011

People’s Community Health Center
Greenvale Mason Avenue Center
3028 Greenmount Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21218
Oct. 14, 2010
Nov. 11, 2010
Dec. 9, 2010
Jan. 13, 2011

People’s Community Health Center
Yorkwood Center
5225 York Road
Baltimore, MD 21212
Oct. 27, 2010
Nov. 24, 2010
Dec. 22, 2010
Jan. 26, 2011

People’s Community Health Center
Anne Arundel
5517 Ritchie Highway
Baltimore, MD 21225
Nov. 1, 2010
Dec. 6, 2010
Jan. 3, 2011

Chase Brexton
1001 Cathedral Street
Baltimore, MD 21201
Nov. 5, 2010
Dec. 3, 2010
Jan. 7, 2011

Greater Baden
13650 Baden Westwood Rd.
Brandywine, MD 20615
Oct. 20, 2010
Nov. 17, 2010
Dec. 15, 2010
Jan. 19, 2011

BALANCE BILLING
Priority Partners members should not be billed for any services included in the HealthChoice/Priority Partners benefit package.
If you receive a balance bill from a provider, please call Customer Service at 800-654-9728, for assistance.