

Healthwise

A PERS Health Insurance Program newsletter



WINTER 2008

Coming soon: New ways to get the information you need

At our annual plan change meetings this fall, PERS distributed a survey that asked members about their use of the Internet and how they like to receive information. PERS is still analyzing all of the results, but one message was very clear: Members want more options for accessing information.

Our commitment to you

The PERS Health Insurance Program is committed to providing information in ways that work for all of our members. In the coming years, we are planning to go green by using less paper while still providing you with all the information you need to make informed decisions about your health insurance coverage.

Beginning fall 2009, for the 2010 plan year, PERS will develop a condensed version of the PERS Health Insurance Program Member Handbook and Benefit Guide for current enrollees in a

PERS-sponsored plan. This condensed version will include new rate and benefit comparisons and a description of any changes to benefits in the medical, dental and prescription drug plan for the coming year. Full member handbooks will be available upon request.

Accessing information online

While PERS and the presentation team will continue to provide live meetings around the state, we understand that not everyone is able to attend. As another option for accessing our plan change and Medicare presentations, PERS will post videos of the presentations on the PERS Health Insurance Program website so that you can view them at your convenience.

Stay tuned to future HealthWise issues for updates on our expanded use of technology and how we're bringing information to you.

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Medication information for PERS ODS Prescription Drug Plan Members (PDP)

For a complete list of brand and generic medications covered under your current PERS prescription drug benefit, please visit ODS online at www.odscompanies.com/members, log on to myODS and consult the PERS Prescription Drug Plan List of Covered Drugs.

What you should know about shingles and Zostavax

Shingles, sometimes called “zoster,” is a painful rash caused by a virus called “varicella zoster.” This virus is the same virus that causes chickenpox. After a person recovers from chickenpox, the virus stays in the body. Usually the virus does not cause any problems; however, the virus can reappear years later, causing shingles.

Anyone who has recovered from chickenpox may develop shingles, including children. However, shingles most commonly occurs in people 50 years and older. The risk of getting shingles increases as a person ages. People who have medical conditions that keep the immune system from working properly, like cancer, leukemia, lymphoma and

human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), are at greater risk. People who receive medications that suppress the immune system are also at greater risk of developing shingles.

Patients who get shingles will experience pain, itching or tingling of the skin. This is usually followed by a painful rash with blister-like lesions, usually on one side of the body and often on the face or trunk. Other symptoms can include fever, headache, chills and upset stomach.

There is a vaccine that can prevent this disease. It is called “Zostavax.” Zostavax is approved to reduce the risk of shingles and its associated pain in people 60 years or older. Zostavax, like other

vaccines, helps the body’s own immune system fight off the virus that causes shingles.

A vaccine, like any medicine, can have side effects, such as severe allergic reactions. However, the risk of a vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is extremely small. Some mild side effects that have been associated with Zostavax are redness, soreness, swelling or itching at the site of the injection and headache.

Talk to your healthcare provider if you think you may be at risk for developing shingles or if you would like more information about Zostavax.

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How to avoid flu and pneumonia

Article courtesy of The ODS Companies

The single best method of protecting yourself against the flu and pneumonia is to get shots. You should get a flu shot each fall. The shot for bacterial pneumonia is a once-in-a-lifetime vaccine that you get when you turn 65.

What is the flu?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness and, at times, can lead to death. While most healthy people recover from the flu without

complications, some people — including older people, young children and people with certain health conditions — are at high risk for serious complications from the flu.

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Common symptoms include fever, sore throat, headache, congestion, tiredness (can be extreme), body ache, cough, diarrhea and vomiting.

What is pneumonia?

There are two kinds of pneumonia: viral pneumonia and bacterial pneumonia. Both types are dangerous, but the latter is preventable.

Bacterial pneumonia, also known as “pneumococcal disease,” kills more people in the United States each year than all other vaccine-

preventable diseases combined.

The good news is that it is preventable with a pneumonia vaccine usually administered at age 65. Adults younger than 65 should receive a pneumonia shot if they have a serious chronic condition such as heart disease, lung disease (not including asthma), diabetes, liver disease (including cirrhosis), abnormal immune system or cochlear implants, or if they are residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.

Tips for staying healthy

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and then throw it away.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Avoid touching your face until your hands are clean.

The flu and pneumonia can be prevented. Call your doctor's office and ask about their flu shot schedule.

Keeping high blood pressure under control

Article courtesy of The ODS Companies

Many people have high blood pressure, also called “hypertension,” and don't even know it. The only way to know if your blood pressure is too high is to get it checked when you visit your doctor.

Left untreated, high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart attack, kidney failure and many other serious conditions.

Take these steps

If you have high blood pressure, you can make these changes to help keep it under control:

- Lose weight if you're overweight.
- Eat healthy meals that are low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol and salt.

- Limit alcohol to no more than one drink per day for women or two drinks per day for men.
- Be more physically active. Do some physical activity at least 30 minutes a day. You can do it all at once or break it into shorter sessions to make it easier.
- Take medicine the way your doctor prescribes it. Don't skip doses.

Learn more

Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professional to learn more. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.

Numbers

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PERS Pension Office

www.oregon.gov/pers

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Tigard, OR 97281-3700

Street Address

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Tigard, OR 97223-8634
503-598-7377
888-320-7377

Kaiser Permanente

www.kaiserpermanente.org
500 N.E. Multnomah St., Ste. 100
Portland, OR 97232-2099
503-813-2000
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Providence Health Plan

www.providence.org/healthplans
3601 S.W. Murray Blvd. #10
Beaverton, OR 97005
503-574-8000
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Mailing Address

P.O. Box 4327
Portland, OR 97208-4327

Claims

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Providence RN
503-574-6520
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Clear Choice Health Plans

www.clearchoicehp.com
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Claims

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Medical

503-243-3880
800-962-1533 (Oregon)
800-852-5195 (National)

Dental

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Pharmacy

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