**Ask Dr. Bruce**

**Q.** What is HIV?

**A.** The Human Immunodeficiency Virus, or HIV, is a virus that infects the immune system in the body. The infection changes the immune system and makes it easier for people to get infections and diseases. It can be spread by sexual contact, sharing needles, and can be passed from mother to child during pregnancy. Blood transfusions are screened for HIV and it’s rare to get HIV this way today.

**Q.** What is AIDS?

**A.** AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. HIV infection causes AIDS to develop. It occurs when the HIV virus destroys enough of the immune system to cause an increase in infections.

**Q.** I haven’t heard much lately about HIV or AIDS. Do I need to worry about either disease?

**A.** The treatment for HIV/AIDS has improved a lot over the years. People now live for years with the infection. T.V. and radio news doesn’t cover HIV/AIDS like they used to. But the number of new cases each year has not changed. There are about 50,000 Americans infected each year. It is still a deadly disease. You still need to be safe. There is no cure for HIV. There is no way to get rid of it. Be smart, be safe.

*Cassandra Peterson is program manager for Priority Partners Care Management."

**Facts Worth Knowing**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 1,148,200 people in the United States, age 13 and older, are living with HIV infections, including 207,600 who are unaware of their infection.

Over the past decade, the number of people living with HIV has increased, but the annual number of new HIV infections has remained fairly stable.

In 2011, an estimated 49,273 people were diagnosed with HIV infection in the U.S. In that same year, about 32,052 people were diagnosed with AIDS.
Times are hard. A missed paycheck, health problems, the loss of a job, unpaid bills, domestic violence or substance abuse can force people into homelessness. But there are many resources if you need help.

**Homeless Shelters**
Homeless shelters offer a safe place to sleep and many other services such as job training. Depending on your sex, your age, if you’re married or single, there are a variety of shelters to help anyone in need.

**Youth Shelters**
Youth shelters provide emergency places for young people to stay, usually from ages 16 to 24. The majority of youth shelters provide a roof, meals and additional services designed to help individuals with independent living as quickly as possible.

**Women’s Shelters**
These shelters provide a great place for women who are trying to escape from unsafe and often violent situations in their life. It provides women with refuge and support services that they need to overcome their home-based obstacles.

**Family Shelters**
Family shelters provide secure, temporary refuge and a supportive environment to homeless families. Once you have been accepted into the family shelter, the shelter will help you get back on your feet by providing you with support and care that you need in order to make a positive transition in your life. The length of stay is decided on a case by case basis.

If you’re seeking help for yourself or someone else, start by calling **2-1-1 Maryland** or **800-492-0618**. Keep in mind that each Maryland county offers different services.

**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**
  888-696-9596

- **Priority Partners Website**
  www.ppmco.org

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

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**Did you receive a bill? DON’T panic!**

Priority Partners doctors, or other providers that you may see who are part of the Maryland Medicaid Program should not be sending bills to you unless you signed a waiver stating that you would be responsible for a non-covered service. Under the federal statute, Medicaid members should not be billed for covered services. If you receive a bill that is a covered service, do not pay it. Instead, please contact the enrollee hotline at 800-284-4510.

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**We Want You!**

Join our Consumer Advisory Board (CAB). Tell us your concerns or praise about Priority Partners, and share your ideas on how we can improve.

CAB meetings are held every two months. Transportation, refreshments and a small incentive are provided for each CAB member for each meeting attended. For more information, or if you are interested in participating, please contact our Member Advocate at 410-424-4833.
Your HEALTH Matters is published quarterly for Priority Partners members. Priority Partners MCO (PPMCO) is a state-wide Medicaid Managed Care Organization offered through a partnership between Johns Hopkins HealthCare and the Maryland Community Health System, a group of eight federally qualified health centers.

For information or to submit story ideas:
Your HEALTH Matters, Priority Partners MCO, 6704 Curtis Court, Glen Burnie, MD 21060
or e-mail: dchase@jhhc.com

**HIV in Pregnancy**

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus or HIV is a sexually transmitted disease that can be easily passed from mother to child during pregnancy, delivery or while breastfeeding. HIV can be transmitted through the placenta or breast milk.

It is a standard of prenatal care for all women to be tested for HIV at least once during their pregnancy. It is your choice, but knowing your status will help protect your baby from getting this disease.

If you take care of yourself, having HIV, and being pregnant, is manageable for you and your baby. Many women who have never been tested before find out for the first time during pregnancy. It is important that you know your results so you can take the proper medication to reduce the risk of giving the virus to your child.

Although there currently is no cure for HIV, highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) can decrease the amount of virus in your body. If you do not take medication during pregnancy and at delivery, you have a 25% chance of passing the virus to your baby. If you do take medication, it reduces the risk to less than 2%. Babies born to HIV infected mothers will also take medicine for a period of time after delivery to prevent the virus from growing or spreading in their body.

If you are HIV negative and pregnant, do not assume that HIV will not affect you. If you are still sexually active during pregnancy, you can still contract the virus. Using condoms will help protect you and your baby from becoming infected.

Remember, the greatest love of all is the love of self. Know your status and that of your partner before you engage in sexual activity. Be open and honest in sharing your status with your partner so you can make better decisions about bringing a healthy baby into the world.

If you are HIV positive, Priority Partners has nurse case managers who can help assist you with getting the proper care during your pregnancy. For help or more information please call Partners with Mom Maternity Case Management at 410-762-5355 or 800-261-2396, ext. 5355.

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**Did you know...**

*that children are at risk for high cholesterol which could lead to other serious illnesses? During your child’s next physical, remember to ask the doctor if your child needs a cholesterol screening test.*

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**Pregnancy Corner**

Are You Satisfied

*Why are member satisfaction surveys important? What do they mean?*

Each year, a group of Priority Partners members fill out a satisfaction survey. We use the survey answers to find out how we are doing, and how we can improve. In 2012, we took a careful look at the survey answers from parents and guardians of Priority Partners child members. The results are back, and Priority Partners members scored higher than the other Maryland Medicaid plans four member satisfaction rating questions. Thank you!

Priority Partners MCO placed a lot of effort on improving customer service, and we are pleased to say that members scored our “Customer Service” higher than any of the other Maryland Medicaid plans. In an effort to become better, we will continue to make excellent customer service a priority. We are also providing ideas and tools (called Health Literacy) to Priority Partner’s primary care providers with the goal of improving communication between you and your child’s primary care provider.

Priority Partners MCO values you, and we appreciate your suggestions. The information from the 2012 survey used to continue our quality improvement process. Our goal is to improve the lives of all our plan members by providing access to high quality, member-centered health care. The 2013 Priority Partners Member Satisfaction Survey is coming soon. Please help us reach our goal by giving us your input and answering the survey.
Kid’s Recipe:
Breakfast Smoothie of Champions

You will need:
1 cup skim OR soy milk
1 cup low-fat vanilla yogurt
½ cup frozen blueberries
½ cup frozen strawberries
2 tablespoons smooth natural peanut butter or ground flaxseed

What To Do:
Put all ingredients into a blender and blend until smooth.

Nutrition Information (per serving):
Serving size: 1 cup
Yields: 3 cups
Calories: 184
Total Fat: 6.8 grams
Protein: 9.8 grams

**Kids Puzzle**
Look for the healthy food words in the puzzle below.

**WORD LIST:** bread, grain, fish, water, meat, potatoes, peas, beans, pumpkin, broccoli, cauliflower, apple, orange, banana, watermelon, grapes, cheese, milk, mango, pineapple, nuts, cereal, juice

**B U R Y C V I K L I M C V E D**
**A I G L P Y B R E A D R S Z I**
**N K T K O G V G J L E A A W**
**A U N O L E R T E A W E R F**
**N V W N D S E O T A T O P Z I**
**A I H C R E O O G M F G F V S**
**P Z C R E A L G D F R C K H**
**S P N P P H N L J E H A G R K**
**N F A R H C M E A T R I G V X**
**A G T B A P P L E M A N G O D**
**E R P C A U L I F L O W E R Q**
**B A E L P P A E N I P A C A D**
**V P U M P K I N U J X T I N F**
**Z E L U O N U T S Y G E U G Y**
**D S I L L O C O R B N R J E E**