ask the Doctor

Question: Why should I have my child tested for lead?

Answer: A blood lead test is the only way to find out if your child has lead poisoning. Signs of lead poisoning are not always easy to see. Children can be poisoned by lead, but not act or look sick. Because of this, lead poisoning many times goes undiagnosed.

Question: How can I have my child tested for lead?

Answer: You can discuss having your child tested with your health care provider. Not all providers routinely test children for lead, so you may need to ask specifically about lead testing.

Question: How do you get tested for lead? Does it hurt?

Answer: The amount of lead found in a child’s blood is called a blood lead level. Blood lead tests tell how many micrograms of lead are in your child’s blood. A blood level will tell if your child has been exposed to lead. To get a blood lead level, blood is taken from a vein in the arm. However, a finger-prick test is also an accurate measure and can be less scary and painful for your child.
Day in and day out, someone (a family member, friend or doctor) tells you what you need to do in order to live a healthier life. You see it advertised on television, you hear it on the radio, or you receive health information in the mail. Regardless, Priority Partners does all of this, and for one good reason: YOU!

Living a healthier lifestyle has many benefits for not only you, but for your loved ones. Research has proven that the impact of good health on your quality of life is far-reaching, regardless of your age, sex or physical ability. Good health promotes energy and stamina, it helps you control your weight, it improves your mood, it deters chronic disease, and it improves the amount of time you have on this earth.

WHERE TO START? HAVE YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE CHECKED.
High blood pressure is a common and dangerous condition. Having high blood pressure means the pressure of the blood in your blood vessels is higher than it should be. High blood pressure is known as the “silent killer” because so many people don’t even know they have it. When your blood pressure is high, you are at risk for heart disease, kidney failure, stroke, and other serious medical conditions. That’s why it’s important to have your blood pressure checked on a regular basis.

SIMPLE STEPS TO CONTROL YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS
Most people diagnosed with high blood pressure want to stay below 140/90. Your primary care provider (PCP) can tell you your personal target blood pressure.

MAKE A PLAN
Work with your PCP to make a plan on lowering your blood pressure.

WORK ON YOUR LIFESTYLE
It’s easier said than done, but lose a few pounds. Get active and eat healthier. Introduce fruits, vegetables, and lean protein into your diet. Reduce your salt intake by staying under 1,500 mg a day. Decreasing salt is the best way to reduce high blood pressure. And limit your alcohol intake.

TAKE MEDICATIONS AS PRESCRIBED
Take medications exactly the way your health care provider prescribes them.

Here’s what we say, “Quit Smoking. Lose weight. Eat right. Get your check-ups. Exercise and limit your alcohol intake.”

Here’s what some of you hear, “Blah blah, blah blah, blah blah, and blah blah!”

Take Charge of Your Health
Your Health Matters

If you would like more information about our Health Education Programs, please call 800-957-9760 or email healtheducation@jhhc.com.

Gloria Brown is very clear when it comes to advice about how to live a healthier lifestyle.

“Weight loss takes time. You can do it if you put your mind to it. Don’t doubt yourself; don’t let other discourage you. And take it one day at a time.”

Gloria, who’s battled a number of physical illnesses and was considered obese, decided enough was enough. When her doctor encouraged her to join the MOVE! Program, she didn’t hesitate. Gloria immediately signed up for the 8-week program.

Working with a health educator, Gloria learned about nutrition and what she needed to do to change her diet. She started to eat the “right” foods and worked on portion size. Instead of frying foods, Gloria started to bake or broil her chicken or fish. She also started exercising. In the process, Gloria shed more than 100 pounds.

“Gloria is a wonderful human being. Her life’s work is to lose weight and get healthy. She came to the program with the determination to figure out how this was going to be accomplished,” said Karen Stewart, a Johns Hopkins HealthCare (JHHC) health educator who taught the class Gloria was in.

Gloria Brown has been a Priority Partners member for more than 10 years. This year she finally learned to MOVE.

“When she first started the program, she changed her eating behaviors right away. She cleaned out her cabinets and stopped letting people bring unhealthy foods into her home,” added Karen. “She is a very determined lady.”

Gloria’s journey isn’t finished. She has more weight to lose. Her goal is to wear a bathing suit to prove to everyone that “I did it, and I did it for me.”

IMPORTANCE OF VACCINATIONS DURING PREGNANCY

You do everything that you can to keep your baby healthy during pregnancy, but there is one more measure that you can take before welcoming your bundle of joy. You know how important it is to vaccinate your infants and school-age children, but there are also vaccines that pregnant women need.

Between weeks 27 and 36 of pregnancy, expecting mothers should get the Tdap vaccine. This protects the mother and the baby against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis. The Tdap vaccine is especially important to protect against the whooping cough (pertussis), which can be spread through contact with someone who is coughing and sneezing. This is very threatening to babies and can cause them to stop breathing.

The Tdap vaccine will help the baby’s body fight off any contact with the whooping cough bacteria early in life. Babies, themselves, will get the vaccine, along with others, when they are 2 months old.

Pregnant women are at an increased risk of breathing issues, premature labor, and hospitalizations from the flu. The influenza vaccination (the “flu shot”) is another needed protection. The flu shot can also protect the baby even after birth. It is safe for pregnant women, and can be received during any trimester.

If you need additional information about vaccinations, talk to your health care provider or call Customer Service at 800-654-9728.

Gloria Brown has been a Priority Partners member for more than 10 years. This year she finally learned to MOVE.

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See if you can find the answers to the following seasonal jokes.

**Question:** What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire?
**Answer:** Frostbite.

**Question:** What is a cow’s favorite day?
**Answer:** Moo-oo-years Day!

**Question:** What do snowmen like to eat for breakfast?
**Answer:** Frosted Flakes.

**Question:** What is a parent’s favorite holiday song?
**Answer:** Silent Night.

**Question:** What did the Gingerbread Man put on his bed?
**Answer:** A cookie sheet!

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**Your Health Matters.** 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. You can also send a fax to 410-762-1527. All information will be kept confidential.
QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

The Quality Improvement Program focuses on improving the quality of care and services delivered to our Priority Partners members, network providers, and purchasers. You can obtain more information about our programs, or about our progress toward improvement goals, by calling 800-654-9728. Or you can access that information from our website at ppmco.org. Review 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: 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. While members identified with certain needs may be automatically enrolled in the program, they are not obligated to participate in these programs. Details regarding the programs are located on our website.

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.

UTILIZATION MANAGEMENT

The Priority Partners Utilization Management (UM) Program is designed to ensure that our members receive the right care at the right time in the right setting. Priority Partners’ UM 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.

Please note that Priority Partners does not make decisions about hiring, promoting or terminating doctors or Priority Partners staff based on the likelihood that the doctor or staff member supports denial of benefits.

If you would like to reach a UM representative, please call 410-424-4480 or 800-261-2461 with your request. UM staff is available to provide assistance Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (excluding holidays).

PHARMACY UPDATE

A variety of pharmacy information and resources are available to you on the Priority Partners member website. Resources include pharmacy formulary information which is a list of medications that are covered by Priority Partners. It explains how you or your doctor can request approval for medication that are not listed on the pharmacy formulary. The formulary is updated quarterly or as determined by Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee to include new medications and safety information. Look for updates to the pharmacy formulary at ppmco.org. You can also contact Customer Service at 800-654-9728 with any questions about pharmacy benefits.

We are committed to covering safe, effective, and affordable medications for our members, so we regularly review and update our drug formularies (list of covered drugs). We may add/remove drugs from the formulary or add rules about whether and when certain drugs are covered during the year. The formulary was updated in October 2014. You may view the formulary by visiting our website at ppmco.org.

WHAT’S IN YOUR HANDBOOK

Information about how to use your health benefit plan can be found in your member handbook, which is mailed to you after your enrollment. The same information can be located on the Priority Partners website at ppmco.org. It includes:

> How to access care and obtain primary care services
> Benefits and services included/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

To request an interpreter, contact the Special Needs Coordinator at 410-424-4906, or toll free at 800-261-2396, ext. 4906.

For hearing impaired members, a TTY line is available from 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Maryland Relay Operator number is 800-201-7165.
How to obtain care after normal office hours
How to obtain care from a specialist, mental health or substance abuse provider
How to compliment us, submit a complaint, or request a review of an adverse decision
What to do if you think your 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
If you would like a paper copy of the handbook, please call Customer Service at 800-654-9728.

WE CARE ABOUT YOUR PRIVACY
Priority Partners is committed to respecting your privacy. The purpose of this information is to describe how your Protected Health Information (PHI) may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information. Please review your Notice of Privacy Practices (NPP) carefully.

HIPAA is a federal law that deals with, among other things, the privacy of your health information. HIPAA stands for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. It protects you against the misuse of your Protected Health Information, often called PHI, when the PHI is in the hands of a covered health care provider (doctor, hospital, laboratory, etc.) or health plan such as Priority Partners.

What is Protected Health Information (PHI)?
PHI is individually identifiable health information about a person’s health, the treatment of his or her health condition, or billing or payment for a person’s health care services. PHI that is written on paper, contained in email, a fax or a computer or spoken is protected by HIPAA.

Internal Protection of PHI
Priority Partners has put together internal policies and procedures that address how we protect oral (spoken), written, and electronic use of PHI. For your protection, Priority Partners always verifies the identities of both the member and the requestor before responding to a request for a member’s PHI. Examples of such contact are:

1. Questions about your treatment or payment activities
2. Requests to look at, copy, or amend your Priority Partners Plan records
3. Requests to obtain a list of Priority Partners Plan disclosures of your health information
Priority Partners secures and limits access to all hard-copy and electronic files. All electronic data is password protected. Priority Partners limits workforce member access to all hard-copy and electronic files. Internal controls are in place to ensure that only those workforce members with a “need to know” have access to information required to perform their specific job function. All workforce members are required to only utilize and/or access the “minimum necessary” information.

Use of Authorizations
Priority Partners must ask your permission to release your PHI to others, with some exceptions. Priority Partners is allowed to share your PHI with others without your permission to carry out treatment, payment, or health care operations. This means that Priority Partners may share your individually identifiable health information with other people to provide you with medical treatment and related services, to bill and collect payment for treatment and services, or to run or evaluate its business practices. Priority Partners may also share your PHI without your permission when it is required by law to do so (for example, in response to a subpoena) or otherwise when it is allowed by law to do so.

Other purposes, such as sharing your PHI with your attorney, your child’s school, or even your husband or wife, you must first give Priority Partners permission to share the information. You can give this permission by filling out an authorizations form. These forms are listed below.

Authorization for Release of Health Information – Standing
This Authorization permits another person to access the plan member’s records and general information on an ongoing basis.

Authorization for Release of Health Information – Unique/One Time Request
This Authorization permits the plan member to receive copies of his or her own records and permits the plan member to authorize another person to access his or her plan record member for a specific limited purpose as noted on the Authorization.

Authorizations can be mailed to:
> PPMCO Compliance Department
> Johns Hopkins HealthCare
> 6704 Curtis Court
> Glen Burnie, MD 21060
> or faxed to: 410-762-1527

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

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 Protected Health Information (PHI), may be 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 and the terms of this Notice at any time effective for PHI that we already have about you as well as any information we receive in the future. 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 or 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 treatment and services provided to you. 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 for PPMCO operations. For example, PPMCO may use or share your information for case management and care coordination, 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. 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.

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.

Worker’s compensation: PPMCO may disclose health information to a worker’s compensation programs that provide benefits for work-related injuries or illnesses without regard to fault.

Law suits, 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.

Government programs providing public benefits: PPMCO may disclose your health information relating to eligibility for or enrollment in PPMCO to another agency administering a government program providing public benefits, as long as sharing the health information or maintaining the health information in a single or combined data system is required or otherwise authorized by law.
Accounting of disclosures: You have a right to request a list of the disclosures made of your health information in the six years prior to your request. This list will not include every disclosure made, including those disclosures of your health information for treatment, payment, and operations. 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.

EXERCISE OF RIGHTS, QUESTIONS, OR COMPLAINTS

If you would like to obtain an appropriate request form to (i) inspect and/or receive a copy of your health information, (ii) request an amendment to your health information, (iii) request an accounting of disclosures of your health information, or (iv) request a disclosure of your health information, or for other questions, please contact:

> Priority Partners MCO
c/o Johns Hopkins HealthCare LLC
Compliance Department
6704 Curtis Court
Glen Burnie MD 21060
Phone: 410-424-4996

If you believe your privacy rights have not been followed as directed by applicable law or as explained in this Notice, you may file a complaint with us using the contact information below. You may also file a complaint with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. PPMCO will take no retaliatory action against you if you make such complaints.

> Johns Hopkins Privacy Office
5801 Smith Avenue
McAuley Hall, Suite 310
Baltimore, MD 21209
Phone: 410-735-6509
Fax: 410-735-6521
Email: hipaa@jhmi.edu

Effective Date: This notice became effective on September 23, 2013.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

It has been estimated that over $60 billion a year is spent on health care fraud. Fraud is any dishonest act that a person commits, or commits on behalf of someone else, which results in benefits that he or she is not entitled to. Priority Partners wants to find and stop health care fraud. Some examples of health care fraud are:

> Using someone else’s medical assistance card or medical assistance number to get health care services.
> Loaning your medical assistance card to another person so they can receive health care services.
> Using someone else’s name, social security number, or other personal information to be eligible for the medical assistance program.
> Hiding income and assets to qualify for the medical assistance program.
> Living in another state while getting Maryland medical assistance benefits.
> Selling prescription medicine or items provided to you under the medical assistance program.
> Obtaining many prescriptions for the same drug from several doctors during the same time period.
> Forging or changing prescription forms.

The Priority Partners Compliance Department investigates charges of actual or suspected health care fraud. These results are then reported to the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH); DHMH may perform its own investigation and take action against people who are found to have committed fraud.

HOW CAN I HELP?

You can help reduce health care fraud by following these simple rules:

> Never loan your medical assistance card to anyone.
> Guard your medical assistance number as you would your social security number.
> Follow all medical assistance rules.
> Report all suspicions of fraud.
> Report lost or stolen medical assistance cards to the Priority Partners Customer Service Department at 800-654-9728.

Remember, health care fraud affects everyone. If you believe someone is committing fraud against Priority Partners or the Maryland Medical Assistance Program, please report the act to Priority Partners, DHMH or the Department of Social Services (DSS). You can remain nameless, and all reports of fraud are kept confidential. Priority Partners is committed to following all applicable laws and regulations, in particular those that address health care fraud, waste and abuse and the improper billing of health care services.

WHAT HAPPENS TO ME IF I REPORT A CONCERN?

Priority Partners takes its responsibility to protect your “right to report” seriously. No Priority Partners employee may threaten, coerce, harass, retaliate, or discriminate against any individual who reports a compliance concern. To support this effort, Priority Partners has enacted zero-tolerance policies and annually trains all personnel on their obligation to uphold the highest integrity when handling compliance related matters. Any individual who reports a compliance concern has the “right” to remain nameless and Priority Partners is committed to enforcing this “right.”

HOW CAN I REPORT FRAUD?

Reporting is simple. You may report through the Managed Care Organization (MCO), the Department of Mental Health and Hygiene (DHMH), or the Department of Social Services (DSS).

You can contact the Priority Partners Compliance Department by one of the following:

> Call: 410-424-4996 or 800-654-9728 and ask for the Compliance Department
> Write to: Priority Partners Compliance Department, 6704 Curtis Ct, Glen Burnie, MD, 21060
> Email: Compliance@jhhc.com
> Fax: 410-762-1527

You can contact DHMH by one of the following:

> Call: DHMH directly at 800-284-4510 or the Maryland Office of Inspector General 866-770-7175
> Write to: DHMH Program Integrity Unit, 201 West Preston Street, Baltimore, MD 21201
> Email: http://www.dhmh.state.md.us/oig/fraud/reportfraud.htm