

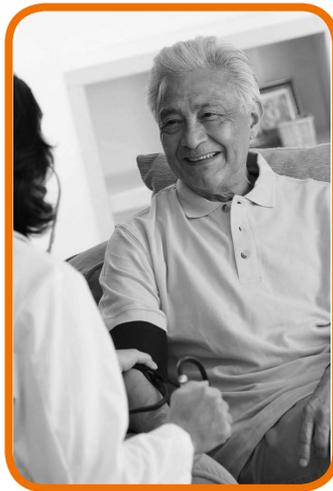


PEEHIP Wellness Program Continues Screenings and Flu Shots

The PEEHIP Wellness screenings and flu shots will continue to be offered and are covered at 100% with no copayment or deductible.

The PEEHIP Wellness Program provides a health screening that consists of a blood pressure check, a pulse reading, body mass index calculation (BMI), a blood test to check glucose (blood sugar), total cholesterol, HDL (good cholesterol), LDL (bad cholesterol), and triglycerides. Osteoporosis screening may also be available.

A “take home” colorectal cancer screening test will also be provided to participants that are considered at high-risk for colorectal cancer (age 50 and over and/or have a family history of colon cancer).



A nurse will review the results of the screenings with the participant and make recommendations for positive lifestyle changes.

The wellness screenings are intended to assist members and their families

identify health risks and receive early and necessary treatment and ultimately lower health care costs. All active and retired members and dependents covered by the PEEHIP Hospital Medical Plan, HMO, or Optional Plans can receive the free health screenings and should participate in the program.

More information regarding the PEEHIP Worksite Wellness program can be found at www.adph.org/worksitewellness or by calling ADPH toll free at 800.252.1818 and asking for the Wellness Division. ■

PEEHIP Weight Watchers at Work Program Ends

As of October 1, 2012, the Weight Watchers at Work Program for active and retired public education members has been discontinued. This program was provided by PEEHIP through the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) who contracted directly with Weight Watchers.



The ADPH did not renew their contract with Weight Watchers for the next fiscal year. As a result, the PEEHIP Weight Watchers at Work Program came to an end on September 30, 2012. PEEHIP members who had started their 15-week program were allowed to complete the program, but PEEHIP will no longer subsidize the cost for any new applications. The discontinuation of the Weight Watchers program in no way affects the PEEHIP Wellness Program administered by the ADPH.

Electronic Payment Options Available Online

PEEHIP members can now make health insurance payments by e-check or credit card. The process is available through RSA Member Online Services at <https://mso.rsa-al.gov>.

Although your PEEHIP premiums are typically deducted from your paycheck or retirement check, you may have received an invoice from PEEHIP that requires you to make a separate payment. Because insurance premiums are always paid one month in advance, you may not have a deduction for your first month of coverage.

This will happen if you are:

- ◆ A new employee and you enroll in coverage on your first day of hire.
- ◆ An existing member and you enroll in medical coverage during the year due to a qualifying life event.

- ◆ A new retiree and you enroll in PEEHIP medical coverage on your retirement date.

COBRA, surviving spouse, and retired members who are required to mail their monthly premium payment to PEEHIP also have the option to pay their monthly insurance premiums by electronic debit from their bank account. If you enroll in this payment option, PEEHIP will automatically debit from your bank account on the first day of each month your monthly premium amount. You will no longer need to mail checks or money orders to PEEHIP.

To enroll in this option, please email the Accounting Department of PEEHIP at PEEHIPI@rsa-al.gov to request a debit authorization form.

Although you may choose to continue to mail your premium payments by check or money order, we believe these new payment options will serve you better by eliminating the possibility of lost checks and/or delays in the mail system. Also, the online or electronic debit payment methods are much more efficient and will eliminate the risk of having your insurance coverage lapse because of non-payment of premiums due to a lost check or delay in the mail system.

PEEHIP is happy to provide additional payment options to you, and we hope it will improve your experience with our service. ■

E-Prescribing Helps PEEHIP Members Receive the Safest Medications at the Lowest Cost

Do you remember the last time your health care provider wrote you a prescription? Chances are it was entered on a keyboard, not written on a prescription pad. Today, electronic prescribing (e-prescribing) tools are used by a growing number of health care providers to securely send prescriptions directly to the pharmacy through a variety of desktop and mobile computing devices. As providers continue to transition away from paper and fax prescriptions, e-prescribing technology is helping improve the overall accuracy and efficiency of medication delivery.

But what if we could make e-prescribing even smarter? PEEHIP now provides a new pre-prescribing tool with our Pharmacy Benefit Manager (PBM), MedImpact Healthcare Systems, Inc. PEEHIP providers who currently use an e-prescribing system in their practice now have access to their patients' unique medication history and prescription benefit coverage, at the point of care. With this new technology, your health care provider will be able to quickly determine which medications are preferred on the PEEHIP plan, as well as which will be the safest drug choices for you at the lowest cost — **saving money for both PEEHIP and its members!**



What does this mean for you? Adding pre-prescribing technology to enhance your health care provider's e-prescribing system will provide numerous benefits to PEEHIP plan members including:

- ◆ Lower overall out-of-pocket costs: Information at the point of care to select preferred medications that meet therapeutic guidelines and are cost effective.
- ◆ Fewer potential for errors caused by similar-sounding drug names: No handwriting for the pharmacist to interpret.
- ◆ Reduced waiting time at the pharmacy: Secure and efficient routing of prescriptions and confirmed benefit information to a preferred pharmacy; no paper prescriptions to process or additional pharmacist verification needed.

With pre-prescribing technology in place, health care providers can leverage the power of their existing e-prescribing systems to make informed prescription choices. This service helps give you access to the safest and most effective medications for the lowest out-of-pocket price dispensed by your preferred pharmacy.

The next time you need a new prescription, be sure to remind your health care provider to take advantage of the pre-prescribing information provided by PEEHIP and MedImpact. ■

It's Time for Scale Back Alabama School 2013!

Scale Back Alabama, now in its seventh year, is a free, confidential, statewide campaign for adults age 18 and older held each year to encourage Alabamians to get healthier by losing weight and becoming active. Last year's campaign drew nearly 30,000 people in almost every county with a cumulative reported weight loss of 148,963 pounds. There is no charge for participating in the program.

The Scale Back Alabama School program is an additional component of Scale Back Alabama. The Scale Back Alabama School program gives school personnel the opportunity to be healthy role models for their students by participating as a Scale Back Alabama School.

Important Scale Back Alabama 2013 Dates

January 17, 2013

Statewide Contest Kickoff

January 19 - 25, 2013

Team Registration/Weigh-in Week

April 6 - 12, 2013

Participant weigh-out week

April 26, 2013

Ending date and announcement of winners & prizes

Becoming a Scale Back Alabama School is easy.

- ◆ To be eligible, schools with five or more teams of four individuals participating in Scale Back Alabama can sign up to become a Scale Back Alabama School. Students are not allowed to participate and weight loss for students is not being encouraged.
- ◆ Go to www.scalebackalabama.com to learn how to participate in Scale Back Alabama. Next, fill out the Scale Back Alabama School registration form which can also be found on the website. Send the school registration form to Laurie Eldridge-Auffant at laurie.eldridge-auffant@adph.state.al.us or by fax at 334.206.5173.
- ◆ As a Scale Back Alabama School, schools receive special recognition and are entered into a school drawing for prizes that promote good nutrition and physical activity habits for the students.

It's a win-win situation as school personnel work to achieve a healthier lifestyle while their students cheer them on and learn the importance of healthy habits. The schools will be entered into a special drawing to win Scale Back Alabama School prizes and team members losing weight will also be entered into the normal Scale Back Alabama drawing for prizes.

Get registered and get started on a healthier lifestyle of losing weight, exercising more and having fun while doing it!

Scale Back Alabama is a joint project of the Alabama Department of Public Health and the Alabama Hospital Association with generous underwriting from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama. For more information, please contact Laurie Eldridge-Auffant at laurie.eldridge-auffant@adph.state.al.us or 334.206.5651. ■

Scale Back with Fruits and Vegetables

Why fruits and vegetables? Eating fruits and vegetables as a part of a well-balanced, healthy eating plan can have a huge impact on your overall health and well-being. These foods are often overlooked but they contain fiber and lots of vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals that are essential for good health.

Fruits and vegetables are low fat, cholesterol free, low sodium, and low calorie foods. People who eat more fruits and vegetables have a reduced risk of developing chronic diseases like stroke, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers. The fiber and water content of fruits and vegetables add volume helping you to feel full while taking in fewer calories which makes them great foods for anyone who wants to reach and maintain a healthy weight.

More information about the health benefits of fruits and vegetables can be found at www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org.

Which types of fruits and vegetables are best?

Fruits and vegetables in all forms (fresh, dried, canned, frozen, pureed, and juiced) can be consumed as part of a well balance eating plan. Here are a few things to keep in mind when buying fruits and vegetables:

- ◆ Remember that fresh fruits and vegetables are best purchased in season since they will be less expensive and at their peak flavor.
- ◆ Select frozen vegetables that are free of sauces and seasonings that can add unnecessary calories, saturated fat, and sodium.
- ◆ Choose canned vegetables that are either "reduced sodium", "low sodium", or "no salt added".
- ◆ Pick canned fruits that are packed in 100% juice or water
- ◆ Drink 100% juice in moderation since it doesn't have the beneficial fiber of whole fruit.
- ◆ Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables each day to ensure that you enjoy all the benefits they offer. They are usually grouped into five major color groups (red, orange, yellow/white, green, and blue/violet). Items in each color group share certain vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals.

When should fruits and vegetables be eaten?

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends making half your plate fruits and vegetables at every meal. This means that fruits and vegetables should be enjoyed each time you eat. Both fruits and vegetables make excellent low calorie snacks. Sliced fruit can be served as dessert after dinner. Vegetables often serve as side dishes, but they may also be added to entrees, muffins, and breads. They come in a variety of colors, shapes, textures and tastes. Adding them each time you eat will make meal and snack time more appealing. ■

New state poll: Risky delays in cancer testing reported among adults

By Cassandra Andrews, *Mobile Press-Register*

Colorectal cancer is the second-leading cancer killer in Alabama, but only 38 percent of older respondents to a new statewide poll said that they had been given a stool test in the last year or had a colonoscopy in the past 10 years.

It was one of an array of questions in polling commissioned by the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, USA Mitchell Cancer Institute and the state Department of Public Health that sought to learn people's cancer fears and to identify obstacles to early-detection testing and treatment.

The polling particularly focused on deadly colorectal cancer, which often goes undetected because of social stigmas.

Up to 90 percent of colon cancer cases can be treated successfully if caught in the early stages, according to health data. But in Alabama, up to 40 percent of cases are diagnosed in later stages, leading to about 1,000 deaths a year.

The telephone poll of 1,024 adult respondents in Alabama was conducted March 24 through May 10, in hopes that publicity about the findings will help

improve screening rates and save lives.

Among the key findings:

- ◆ 38 percent of respondents said there's not much you can do to avoid cancer.
- ◆ Less than half correctly identified eating grilled and processed meats, drinking alcohol, being overweight and lack of exercise as cancer risk factors.
- ◆ Only 40 percent consider themselves well informed about screenings.
- ◆ The greatest obstacles to screening are cost, lack of information and lack of insurance.
- ◆ The Internet is the No. 1 source of health-related information for half of respondents, and two-thirds of respondents said they have Internet access.
- ◆ 64 percent are overweight, based on answers about physical characteristics.

"Having a physician recommendation and patient knowledge are the two most important factors in getting screened for colorectal cancer," said Keith Nichol.

In the survey, respondents were asked about their health, their fear of cancer, knowledge of cancer risk factors, obstacles to getting needed screenings and sources for healthcare information, Nicholls said. Those questions were followed by others for ages 50 and older that dealt with specific issues about colon cancer screenings, including knowledge of colon cancer risk factors, screening options, screening experiences and screening obstacles and intentions.

"Since some people are not going to get a colonoscopy, we need a viable alternative," Nicholls said.

That alternative, public health officials said, is known as a FIT (fecal immunochemical test) – basically, a stool sample – that a person can collect at home and mail back to their physician. Unlike older take-home tests, it does not require patients to change their diet or avoid medicine and vitamins.

State health officials said they are working to educate more Alabama doctors and patients about the newer test that screens for colorectal cancer. ■

Headache Triggers

Source: Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama

Research shows that headache sufferers spend more than four billion dollars a year on over-the-counter pain relievers. There are many triggers that may cause headaches. A trigger is something your body is sensitive to in some way. Although you will not be able to avoid all headache triggers, avoiding what you can may decrease the occurrence and seriousness of your headaches.

- ◆ If you have headaches related to muscle tension in your neck, shoulder and upper back you may be sitting incorrectly. Sit straight in your chair with your lower back supported. If you sit most of the day, take a break once every hour to

stretch your muscles.

- ◆ Physical and emotional stresses are typically the most common tension-type headache triggers. Take thirty minutes a day to meditate, daydream or relax.
- ◆ Various food items can trigger headaches, such as caffeine, red wine, processed meats, chocolate, cheese, citrus fruits, lentils, snow peas and monosodium glutamate (MSG).
- ◆ Focusing on one object for a long time can cause brief head pain. If you sit at a computer, modify the position of your monitor so that the top of the screen is at eye level. Also,

use a document holder to keep copy at eye level. Take an "eye break" every hour by looking away from the screen.

- ◆ Too little or too much sleep can also bring on headaches. You can control your brain's internal clock if you go to bed and wake up at about the same time every day. Adults should get seven to eight hours of sleep each night.
- ◆ Avoid "hunger headaches" by eating three balanced meals a day. If hungry between meals, try snacking on energy foods, such as granola bars or peanut butter crackers. ■