

## Let's Get Prepared for Flu Season

**W**hile the seasonal flu virus can be detected year-round in the United States, most flu viruses are circulated in the fall and winter. Usually, flu activity begins increasing in October, with peak flu activity running from December through February.<sup>1</sup>

The flu can be very serious. It infects the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. Illnesses caused by the flu can range from mild to severe and can even cause death. One of the best ways to avoid the flu and its related complications is to get a flu shot.<sup>2</sup>

To protect yourself and those around you, the most effective way to prevent the seasonal flu is by getting an annual flu vaccine. Additionally, good health habits like avoiding close contact with people who are sick, covering your cough, and washing your hands can often help stop the spread and prevent not only the flu but other respiratory illnesses.<sup>3</sup>

People can get sick with the flu at any age, but school-aged children are a group with a higher likelihood of developing symptoms from the flu. According to the CDC, children younger than 18 are more than twice as likely to develop symptoms from the flu virus compared to adults 65 and older. Students, parents, and educators are all encouraged to get the flu vaccine every year. September and October are generally considered good months to obtain the flu vaccine. For kids, teachers, or others in the education community who become sick with the flu, the CDC recommends staying home at least 24 hours after no longer having a fever without using fever-reducing medicine.<sup>4</sup>

Your PEEHIP benefits allow you to receive your flu vaccine via a variety of different options listed below:

- ◆ Your doctor's office
- ◆ Your local pharmacy
- ◆ The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH)
  - ◇ To see a listing of available and upcoming flu shot

clinics offered by ADPH, please visit <https://dph1.adph.state.al.us/publiccal2/>

There is no additional cost or copay for any of the flu shot options. **Please bring your PEEHIP ID card to whichever location you choose for your vaccine.**

**Members covered under the PEEHIP UnitedHealthcare® Group**

**Medicare Advantage (PPO) Plan:** Be sure to show your **UnitedHealthcare® ID card** when getting a flu shot from **your doctor, your pharmacy, or the ADPH.**

Contact your network pharmacy in advance to inquire about flu vaccine availability, age restrictions, and current vaccination schedules. Also, don't forget to present your member ID card to the pharmacist.

Vaccines at a local participating pharmacy typically don't require an appointment and are often quicker to get than those administered by a physician. Plan to get your flu vaccine today. ●

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/keyfacts.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/school-business/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/guidance.htm>



## Wellness Screening Deadline

The August 31 deadline to get a wellness screening and earn a waiver of the \$50 monthly wellness premium has passed. If you did not get your screening, you are **not** locked into incurring the wellness premium all plan year. Make plans to get a wellness screening at your first opportunity, and you will earn the waiver prospectively for the remainder of the plan year.

See below for available options to get your screening:

- ◆ The ADPH offers free screenings at PEEHIP worksite locations and county health departments. To view the availability schedule, visit <https://dph1.adph.state.al.us/publiccal2/>.

- ◆ Screenings are available from your primary healthcare provider. Bring a PEEHIP HEALTHCARE PROVIDER SCREENING FORM for your provider to complete and submit by mail or fax to the ADPH. The form can be found at [rsa-al.gov/peehip/wellness/](https://rsa-al.gov/peehip/wellness/).
- ◆ Screenings are available at participating pharmacies all over the state. To see a list of participating pharmacies, visit [rsa-al.gov/peehip/wellness/](https://rsa-al.gov/peehip/wellness/) or call Blue Cross and Blue Shield at 800.327.3994 to find a local participating pharmacy. If you choose to get your screening at a pharmacy, an appointment may be required. ●

## What is a Biosimilar?

Research and development in prescription drugs are constantly making advances to offer increasingly better therapy and treatment. One such area of innovation in the modern era is the use of biologic drugs. Biologic drugs are complex, large molecule drugs developed from living organisms such as human, animal, or microorganism sources. Unlike small molecule drugs such as older statins or cholesterol medications, biologic drugs are more difficult to manufacture and have inherent differences from batch-to-batch.



While biologic drugs offer tremendous potential for effective therapy, these drugs also come at a tremendous cost. According to *The American Journal of Medicine*, although these drugs represent only about 2% of all prescription volume, these drugs make up about 37% of all drug spending in America.<sup>1</sup> Managing the cost of biologic drugs has been exceptionally difficult for plans like PEEHIP since every incremental utilizer represents a significant increase to over-

all plan cost. However, recent market developments represent highly optimistic opportunities for cost improvement.

Biosimilars, which are near exact replicas of the original brand biologic drug, are defined as being highly similar to the original brand with no clinically meaningful distinctions from that original brand in terms of safety, purity, and potency. Biosimilars have the same expected benefits and the same expected risks as the original brand biologic drugs. The key difference between biosimilars to brand biologics is the disparity in cost, with biosimilars often released at dramatically lower prices.<sup>2</sup>

Biosimilars have been available for a short time in medical drugs which are administered by a clinician and are now gaining momentum in pharmacy drugs which are self-administered. Many seek interchangeable status from the FDA, meaning if state law permits, the biosimilar could be swapped for the brand at the pharmacy counter. According to Evernorth, the health services segment of Cigna to which PEEHIP's Pharmacy Benefit Manager Express Scripts® belongs, biosimilars could drive \$225 to \$375 billion in savings for their plan sponsors by 2031.<sup>3</sup>

PEEHIP will continue to partner with Express Scripts® to offer the best health benefits including drug therapy at the lowest possible cost. Watch for more information about biosimilars and how these drugs can reduce the cost of healthcare while delivering the same high-quality care. ●

<sup>1</sup> <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2764808>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fda.gov/media/151058/download?attachment>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.evernorth.com/articles/leveraging-biosimilars-drive-savings-and-support-patient-access>

# Medicare-Eligible PEEHIP Members

The information below pertains to Medicare-eligible PEEHIP retirees or Medicare-eligible dependents of PEEHIP retirees. For more information, visit [rsa-al.gov/peehip/retirees/](https://rsa-al.gov/peehip/retirees/).

## Register for Your Secure Online Account

**Y**our member site has been designed to help you do more, giving you 24/7 access to everything your plan has to offer. After you sign up for your online account and log in, you can:

- ◆ Look up your latest claim information
- ◆ Review benefit information and plan materials
- ◆ Print a temporary UnitedHealthcare® member ID card and request a new one
- ◆ Search for drugs and see how much they cost under your plan
- ◆ Search for network doctors
- ◆ Explore Renew Active® by UnitedHealthcare®, the member-only Health and Wellness Experience
- ◆ Sign up to get your Explanation of Benefits (EOB) and other plan documents online



### How to register for your secure online account

Follow the simple HealthSafe ID registration steps to sign up for your online account:

1. Visit [retiree.uhc.com/peehip](https://retiree.uhc.com/peehip), click on the **sign in or register** button, and then click **register now** on the next screen
2. Enter your first and last name, date of birth, ZIP code, UnitedHealthcare® member ID number, and click **continue**
3. Create your username and password, enter your email address, and click **create my ID**
4. For security purposes, you will be asked to verify

your account by email, call, or text

- ◆ If by email, follow the instructions in your confirmation email
- ◆ If by call or text, enter the code you receive into the website

Write down your username and password and keep them in a safe place. You will need them each time you sign into your account.

### Download the UnitedHealthcare® app

With the UnitedHealthcare® app, you can find care and manage your plan details anywhere you go. Download the app in your app store or scan the QR code with your smartphone or tablet. ●

# Virtual Doctor Visits

## Talk to a doctor from anywhere

**W**ith Virtual Doctor Visits, you are able to talk to a doctor by phone or video<sup>1</sup> from your computer, tablet, or smartphone – 24/7, day or night. You can ask questions, get a diagnosis, or even get medication prescribed and have it sent to your pharmacy. Register and complete a brief medical history today so you will be ready when you need care. You can request a doctor's visit whenever you need one or schedule one at a convenient time.

Amwell®, Doctor on Demand™, and Teladoc® are part of the United-Healthcare® provider network bringing you this innovative service.<sup>2</sup>

### Ways to access Virtual Doctor Visits

On your computer:

- ◆ Visit [uhcvirtualvisits.com](https://uhcvirtualvisits.com) and click on "Choose a Medical Provider"

On your tablet or smartphone:

- ◆ Download the Amwell® app
- ◆ Download the Doctor on Demand™ app
- ◆ Download the Teladoc® app or call 855.615.8335 to set up your account and request a visit by phone

### Answers to common questions

*How quickly can I talk to someone and how long does a visit last?*

Once a request for a visit has been submitted, wait times vary based on availability. A typical visit lasts 10–15 minutes.

*Who will I be talking to?*

You can find a list of participating Virtual Doctor Visit providers by visiting [uhcvirtualvisits.com](https://uhcvirtualvisits.com) and selecting "Choose a Medical Provider."

*Can I use it for any medical situation?*

Virtual Doctor Visits may be best for situations like a cold, flu, skin rash, eye issue, or many other common conditions that may be treatable without a physical exam or X-ray. You will be advised if an in-person visit is appropriate. Virtual Doctor Visits are not appropriate for serious or emergency medical situations.<sup>3</sup>

Examples of when you could use a Virtual Doctor Visit include allergies, bladder/urinary tract infections, bronchitis, cough/cold, diarrhea, fever, migraine/headaches, pink eye, rash, flu, sinus problems, sore throat, stomachaches, a quick assessment of severity, and much more.



Examples of when you should not use a Virtual Doctor Visit include anything requiring a hands-on exam, test, or X-ray, cancer or other complex conditions, chronic conditions, international visits, sprains or broken bones, or other injuries requiring bandaging.

If you are experiencing a medical emergency, you should seek appropriate emergency medical assistance such as calling 911. ●

<sup>1</sup> Data rates may apply.

<sup>2</sup> Providers listed may not be available in every area. Other providers are available in our network. Contact the customer service number on the back of your member ID card for more information.

<sup>3</sup> This service should not be used for emergency or urgent care needs. In an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.