



Health Plus News

YOUR COMMUNITY'S GUARDIAN ANGEL SINCE 1984

PROVIDER

www.healthplus-ny.org Providers, call toll free 1-800-450-8753.

You can help us reduce ER use

Health Plus recently participated in a meeting of managed Medicaid plans hosted by the New York State Department of Health to look at reducing inappropriate use of emergency rooms by members. A survey of emergency room (ER) use sponsored by the NYS DOH showed that, although members who used ERs had primary care physicians (PCPs), many did not know their physicians' names, or lacked accurate information on office hours.

Many

Many



members failed to follow up with their PCPs after visiting the ER, even though instructed to do so by hospital staff.

Educate members

As a result of this meeting, Health Plus is taking a number of steps to better educate members on appropriate ER use. We presently contact members with frequent ER visits to educate them on this matter.

Nurses from our Health Services department will be contacting these members to provide them with more personalized education on appropriate ER use. We also plan to contact their PCPs to facilitate member visits.

Health Plus will make available to both new members and PCPs copies of our brochures titled *Why Should I Have My Own Doctor?* and *What Is an Emergency?* in both English and Spanish.

Nurse advice line

We will continue to encourage greater use of Tele-Nurse Plus, our nurse advice line available 24 hours

a day, seven days a week (1-800-437-7587). This toll-free line is available to members for both health education and advice on urgent health problems.

Members who call with urgent problems are directed to their PCPs, the ER, or other health resources. Notices are sent to PCPs informing them of Tele-Nurse decisions regarding their panel patients.

Please note that all new members are educated on the importance of primary care, appropriate ER use, and how to use Tele-Nurse Plus.

Finally, frequent ER users will be evaluated for intensive case management by a Health Plus case manager to educate the member regarding proper use of the PCP and other covered services.

We hope that working together we can reduce the overall number of ER visits and provide a better medical environment for our members and their health care needs.

PCPs—Remember to submit your encounter data.

Health Plus

205 Montague, Third Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201

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Fax your address changes to:
1-718-504-9602
or e-mail to:
providers@healthplus-ny.org



August

Children's Eye Health and Safety Month

According to the organizations *Prevent Blindness America* and the *National Eye Institute*, less than 20 percent of children in the United States are effectively screened for vision problems.

During **Children's Eye Health and Safety Month** in August, we

would like to remind medical practitioners to include vision screening as part of their routine care of children. Practitioners are also urged to remind Health Plus members about scheduling yearly vision exams for their children.

Member benefits

Vision screening and prescription eyewear are covered under

all three Health Plus benefit programs. The earlier a vision problem is detected, the more effective the treatment will be.

For more information, log on to www.preventblindness.org. You may also refer members to call Member Services at 1-800-300-8181 for more information on their vision care benefits.

Developmental assessments

Health Plus is a proud member of the Center for Healthcare Strategies' Best Clinical and Administrative Practices initiative (BCAP). Leaders in managed care across the country are participating in this initiative to identify and replicate best practices for targeted populations.

This year, as part of our involvement with BCAP, we have made a commitment to improve the quality of developmental assessments in our member population, specifically among members ages 0 to 4 years old. We have chosen

to focus on the following:

- Increasing the amount of members who attend regularly scheduled well-child visits;
- Revising our Health Plus outreach script—used when contacting nonusers of preventive care visits—to emphasize the importance of developmental screenings;
- Creating a predictive high-risk criteria set using applicable administrative (claims) data;
- Designing cards for mailing to all members at 5 and 11 months with age-appropriate developmen-

tal milestones;

- Emphasizing to PCPs the importance of proper coding when developmental assessment services are rendered;
- Designing new provider education materials; and
- Identifying in-network facilities where definitive developmental assessments can be obtained.

For more information on The Center for Health Care Strategies' BCAP program, please visit their Web site at www.chcs.org/ManagedCare/index.html.

What's new on our Web site

Check out the "Providers" section of our Web site at www.healthplus-ny.org to access the following resources to assist you in your practice:

- Blank *Health Plus Form for Referrals to Disease Management and Case Management Services* and for *Prior Authorization of Health Services*
- Practitioner's page of the *National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)*
- "Depression in Children and Adolescents: A Fact Sheet for Physicians" from *NIMH*
- Alcohol and drug facts from the *Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP)*

■ **NYC Department of Education Health**

Services and Accommodations forms for students who need health services (including medications) or accommodations in school

■ Asthma Action Plan Form from the *NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Community Asthma Program* Web site

If you have suggestions for other resources you would like to see included on our Web site, please e-mail us at providers@healthplus-ny.org.



Refer smokers to our FREE & CLEAR Smoking Cessation Program at 1-800-300-8181.

How are our providers doing?

In April 2002, Health Plus administered a short survey by mail to all its pediatricians and family practitioners to identify the most- and least-utilized practices related to immunizing members up to age 2. In addition to this survey, Health Plus Provider Relations Associates also visited a select number of doctors to provide information on strategies for improving immunization rates in private practices.

Out of 700 PCPs who were mailed this survey, 99 returned a completed form, for a return rate of 14.1 percent.

More than 90 percent of respondents reported that they often or very often:

- Review children's immunization records at every visit;
- Use current immunization

schedules in charts;

- Provide an immunization schedule and record keeper to parents;
- Encourage parents/caregivers to know the immunization status of their children, to keep each child's immunization record up-to-date and in a safe place, and to bring it to every visit;
- Display posters and brochures about childhood immunization in waiting rooms and reception areas;
- Provide free or low-cost vaccinations for children through the VFC (Vaccinations For Children) program; and
- Participate in immunization registry efforts in their areas.

On the other hand, only 40 percent of respondents or less reported that they often or very often:

- Review records weekly to find underimmunized or

unimmunized children;

- Use CASA (Clinic Assessment Software Application) or similar software programs to support immunization activities; and
- Provide information on transportation services for clients who have limited means or use public transportation.

We're here to help

Health Plus supports our providers' efforts in immunizing our youngest members against preventable diseases. It is important that all providers be aware of the many strategies that can be implemented to increase practice-specific immunization rates.

Throughout the year, our Provider Relations and Quality Improvement departments will be in contact with you to assist with these matters. We hope you find our efforts helpful to your practice.

Referring patients with diabetes

Patients with diabetes may need consultations by specialists, especially in cases of comorbidity. In the list below, we are providing you with current standards for referring patients with type 1 and type 2 diabetes to specialists. These standards are adapted from the "Milliman Care Guidelines" as published in *Ambulatory Care* (8th ed., 2002):

■ **Education:** Refer to a certified diabetes educator (CDE) or a diabetes specialist or a multidisciplinary diabetes program for: (a) a person newly diagnosed with diabetes; (b) a patient who is not meeting the goals of treatment; (c) lack of hypoglycemia awareness; (d) preconception

counseling; (e) pregnancy.

■ **Endocrinologist:** Refer for: (a) difficult-to-control diabetes; (b) consideration for insulin therapy; (c) intensification of insulin therapy.

■ **Neurologist:** Refer for neurovascular or neuropathic symptoms whose diagnosis or treatment plan is unclear, including gait disturbance, progressive weakness, or ataxia.

■ **Nephrologist:** Refer for: (a) early renal insufficiency; (b) any 0.5 mg/dL elevation of creatinine above baseline or a creatine persistently greater than 2.0 mg/dL; (c) proteinuria/microalbuminuria; (d) difficulties in managing hypertension or hyperkalemia.

■ **Ophthalmologist:** Refer: (a) at time of diagnosis; (b) annually

subsequently.

■ **Podiatrist:** Refer for: (a) a foot lesion or cellulitis not responding to therapy; (b) a history of advanced, complex, or progressively unstable foot lesions; (c) the following (optionally): lost protective foot sense as measured by the Semmes-Weinstein 5.07mm Hg monofilament test or a deformed foot that might benefit from an orthotic.

■ **Vascular surgeon:** Refer for: (a) diminished or absent peripheral pulses with associated cyanotic or ischemic foot; (b) nonhealing wounds; (c) differential upper extremity blood pressures of 20mm Hg or more; (d) ankle-brachial index less than 0.5.

Ensure children receive immunizations by age 2!

CLAIMS CORNER

If you have a question for Claims Corner, please submit it to Barbara Thompson, Director of Claims, Health Plus, 241 37th St., Suite 4, Brooklyn, NY 11232.

Dear Claims Corner:

Can Health Plus providers expect to submit claims electronically in the near future? Currently many carriers are accepting claims through WebMD. It would certainly facilitate claims submissions.

Dear Provider:

We are in the process of changing our EDI gateway, after which we will have to test it

thoroughly. We are required to have this completed by October 2003 but hope to complete it sooner.

Dear Claims Corner:

I read in the last issue that there is a new claims address, but some of my colleagues still send their claims to the old 37th Street address. Which address should I use?

Dear Provider:

Although claims addressed to the 37th Street address will get to the Claims Department, they will be delayed. This can result in processing and payment delays. Please send your claims to the new

Reminder

New claims address:

Health Plus
P.O. Box 200-284
Bay Ridge Station
Brooklyn, NY 11220-0284

P.O. Box address above to ensure timely processing and disbursement of payments.



Using certified mail for claims

We continue to discourage use of certified mail for claims submission. There is no longer special handling of this mail. This can also cause delays. Please send claims directly to the new address announced above.

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HEALTH PLUS NEWS PROVIDER is published as a community service to members of the HEALTH PLUS provider network. HEALTH PLUS Executive Offices are located at 205 Montague St., Third Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201. Our phone number is 1-718-630-0123.

HEALTH PLUS is a not-for-profit health care plan committed to quality health care and dedicated to the health and well-being of our culturally diverse communities through partnerships with members, providers and community-based organizations.

Information in HEALTH PLUS NEWS PROVIDER comes from a wide range of medical experts. If you have any concerns or questions about specific content in this newsletter, please contact HEALTH PLUS Provider Services at the number provided. Models may be used in photos and illustrations. Copyright © 2003 Coffey Communications, Inc. ABO145530

Where to find information

Provider Services 1-800-450-8753
..... (Fax) 1-718-504-9602

Provider Interactive Voice Response Line
(24-hour Member Eligibility, Claims Status,
Specialist Referrals) 1-800-639-6968

Address changes (fax) 1-718-504-9602

Domestic Violence Coordinator 1-718-491-7545

Health Services 1-718-630-0123

Health Education 1-718-491-7584

Quality Improvement 1-718-491-7559

Web site: www.healthplus-ny.org

For expert health information, Health Plus members may call Tele-Nurse Plus 24 hours a day, seven days a week: 1-800-437-7587.