

State of Michigan Retirees For Your Benefit

provides a variety of timely information related to your health care benefits and your health care needs



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Free online health assessment can help you improve your health

When it comes to staying on top of personal health, a busy schedule can keep us from seeing our family doctor as often as we should.

Fortunately, as a State Health Plan PPO member, you have a great resource at your fingertips.

Through BlueHealthConnection® your SHP PPO offers a free online health assessment that creates customized information to help you maintain or pursue a healthy lifestyle. While it's not a replacement for regular doctor visits, the health assessment provides a good picture of how you're doing on your journey toward good health.

The online health assessment helps you become more engaged in your health and wellness. In fact, you may be surprised at how much you can learn about your current health status, habits, activities and issues that may cause you problems in the future and the changes you can make to keep you as healthy as possible.

When you take the free online health assessment, you'll receive:

- A score that summarizes how your current lifestyle affects your health
- A tailored action plan to help you meet your health goals
- Access to 11 online health-coaching programs to support your goals in making lifestyle changes



Online health assessment continued on pg 2



In addition, you'll receive tailored e-mail messages based on your stage of change, personal motivation, self-confidence, perceived barriers and demographics. The e-mails are geared toward changing your behavior in up to 12 key areas such as physical activity, stress management, smoking cessation or chronic illness.

The health assessment takes about 20 minutes. Having the following information at hand isn't necessary but will give you a more complete picture of your health including:

- Blood pressure
- Total cholesterol level, HDL, LDL and triglyceride levels
- Blood glucose
- Height, weight and waist measurement
- Approximate dates of your last health screenings and immunizations

Taking the online health assessment is simple and free. Visit **bcbsm.com** and register or log in to *Member Secured Services*. Then, select the *Health and wellness* tab or click on the *Take Your Health Assessment* link. Take the time to complete the health assessment and evaluate your current health status so you can take the path toward a healthier you.

Are you up to date?

The latest on immunizations

Immunizations aren't just for children; adults need immunizations too. Immunizations can protect you against contagious viruses that can have lifelong consequences. But remember to ask your doctor if the vaccines are appropriate for you.

Pneumonia

The pneumonia vaccine protects against pneumococcal pneumonia, a serious lung infection. People ages 50 and older; those at high risk, including health care providers; people with chronic illnesses or heart or lung diseases; and adults with weakened immune systems should receive this vaccine. The injection usually is given once in a lifetime, but you may need a booster shot every five to 10 years.

Influenza

The flu shot guards against the influenza virus, which can cause chills, headache, sore throat, dry cough, runny nose and body aches. The seasonal flu vaccine protects against three influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during the upcoming season. The 2010-2011 flu vaccine will protect against H3N2, influenza B and H1N1, the virus that caused so much illness last season.

The yearly flu vaccination period begins in September or as soon as the vaccine is available and continues throughout the flu season in January and beyond. This is because the timing and duration of flu seasons vary. While flu outbreaks can happen as early as October, most of the time flu activity peaks in January or later.

Although everyone should get the flu vaccine each flu season, it's especially important for pregnant women, children under five years, and adults ages 50 and older; those at high risk, including health care providers; and people with chronic illnesses or diseases.

Measles, mumps and rubella

The measles, mumps and rubella vaccine is a combination immunization that protects against all three viruses.

Measles is a respiratory infection that causes a total-body skin rash and flu-like symptoms. Infants are generally protected from measles for six months after birth due to immunity passed on from their mothers. Older children are usually immunized against measles according to state and school health regulations. Adults who aren't immunized or who haven't received the full immunization are at high risk for catching the disease.

The measles vaccine shouldn't be given to pregnant women or to children with untreated tuberculosis, leukemia or other cancers, or to people whose immune systems are suppressed for any reason.

Mumps can result in fever and swelling of the neck. Infections are most common during spring, especially April and May. The spread of adult mumps is similar to that of children. The mumps virus resides in the mucus in the nose and throat of the infected person, and in saliva. When that person sneezes or coughs, droplets spray into the air. The infected mucus can land in other people's noses or throats when they breathe or put their fingers in their mouth, nose or eyes after touching an infected surface.

When an adult becomes infected with the mumps virus, the virus begins to multiply within the nose, throat and lymph glands in the neck. The virus can

also enter the bloodstream and spread to other parts of the body. An adult with mumps is contagious anytime from three days prior to the onset of the swelling of the salivary glands to nine days after the onset. A person can spread mumps if he or she becomes infected with the virus, even if symptoms never develop.

Rubella, also known as the German measles, is generally a mild disease. The vaccine is recommended for all children. It's routinely given to young children but is also recommended for pregnant women. If a pregnant woman gets rubella during pregnancy, particularly during the first three months, her baby is at risk of having serious birth defects.

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is a liver disease that can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months. Hepatitis A is usually spread when a person ingests fecal matter — even in microscopic amounts — from contact with objects, food or drinks contaminated by the feces or stool of an infected person.

If you live, work or travel outside the United States, are in the military, work in food service or a day care center, or work or live in an institution or group home, you should receive this vaccine.

Immunizations continued on pg 4



Hepatitis B

The Hepatitis B vaccine is a series of shots that protect against a potentially deadly liver disease that can lead to liver cancer. It's usually spread when blood, semen or another body fluid from an infected person enters the body of someone who isn't infected. This can happen through sexual contact with an infected person or sharing needles, syringes or other drug-injection equipment. The virus can also pass from an infected mother to her baby at birth.

Adults should receive the Hepatitis B vaccine if they:

- Travel to countries where the Hepatitis B virus is common.
- Are exposed to blood or blood products as part of their jobs.
- Have more than one sexual partner.
- Recently acquired a sexually transmitted disease.

Tetanus and diphtheria booster

Tetanus and diphtheria (Td) are caused by bacteria. Tetanus enters the body through cuts, scratches or wounds. It causes painful muscle spasms, usually all over the body, and can lead to lockjaw, a tightening of the jaw muscles, so the person can't open his or her mouth or swallow.

Diphtheria is spread from person to person. It causes a thick covering in the back of the throat and can lead to breathing problems, paralysis, heart failure and even death.

A Td booster can protect you against tetanus and diphtheria. All adults should have a Td booster every 10 years.

Varicella-zoster

This shot protects against chicken pox, which is caused by the varicella-zoster virus and can be fatal in adults. Chicken pox results in a blister-like rash,

itching, fatigue and fever. It's spread easily through the air by infected people when they sneeze or cough. The disease also spreads through contact with an infected person's chicken pox blisters. Because chicken pox is very contagious, it's possible for unvaccinated people who've never had chicken pox to become infected just by being in a room with someone who has the disease. Less commonly, chicken pox transmission can occur when someone comes into direct contact with a person who has shingles, an active herpes zoster infection.

It's important for anyone who didn't have chicken pox as a child to have this immunization. Most complications of adult chicken pox are caused by an infection from bacteria. Chicken pox complications are more likely to occur in adults than in children and account for a disproportionate number of deaths and hospitalizations compared to children.

Shingles

Shingles is a blistering skin rash caused by the same virus that causes chicken pox. After a person has had chicken pox, the virus lies dormant in nerve tissue. As people get older, the virus can reappear in the form of shingles. There may be pain, numbness or tingling of the area. One of the most serious long-term consequences of shingles is postherpetic neuralgia (PHN), a condition where pain persists after the rash has resolved. PHN pain can be very difficult to treat, and it can diminish the quality of life.

The Centers for Disease Control recommends that adults ages 60 and over receive the Zostavax vaccine. It helps the immune system fight the shingles virus; however, it can't treat shingles or the nerve pain that may follow. Zostavax works best against shingles if you get vaccinated while you're in your sixties. In fact, once you reach age 60, the sooner you get vaccinated, the better your chances of protecting yourself from shingles.

These vaccinations are covered according to your State Health Plan PPO guidelines. If you have any questions, please contact the BCBSM State of Michigan Customer Service Center at 1-800-843-4876 for more information.

Sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health.

Immunizations now covered at some pharmacies

Most vaccines and immunizations are approved to be administered only by a health care professional and are part of your medical benefit, not your prescription drug benefit. For SHP PPO members, these shots are administered in the physician's office and can be billed by your physician as a preventive service.

Now, in addition to your physician being able to administer and bill for covered vaccines and immunizations, SHP PPO members can use approved immunization pharmacies that administer these shots. When you use an approved immunization pharmacy, they'll accept our payment as coverage in full so you won't need to be reimbursed.

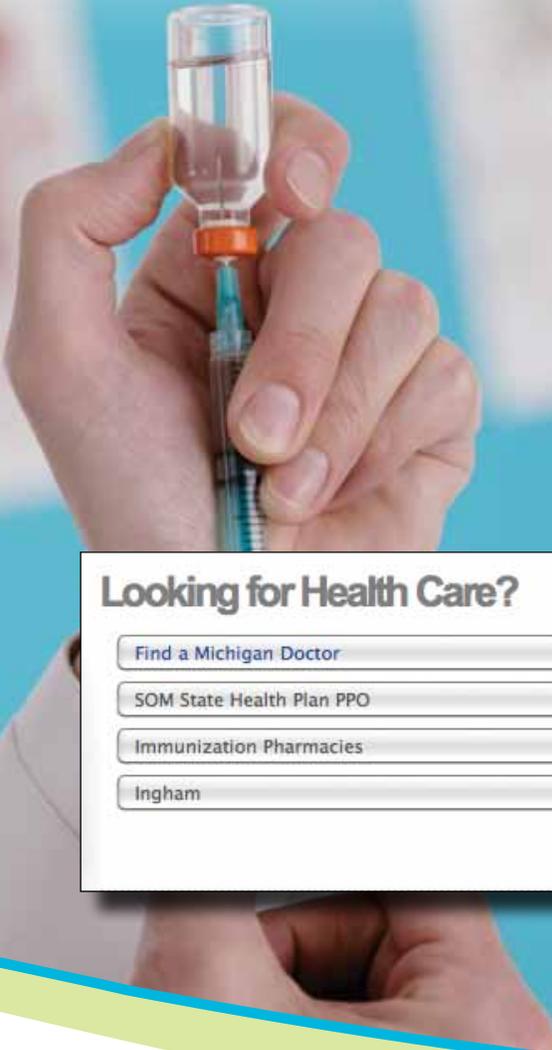
You'll need a written prescription from your physician in order for the pharmacy to bill us directly. Otherwise, your vaccination won't be covered at the pharmacy, and you'll have to pay for the shot and send us your receipt for reimbursement.

If you prefer to have your physician administer the vaccine, ask your physician for a written prescription to take to the immunization pharmacy for the serum. Then take the serum to your physician and receive your shot from him or her. Just remember that many vaccines must be kept at precise temperatures or they lose their effectiveness.

Locating an approved immunization pharmacy is easy

You can locate a convenient immunization pharmacy online.

- Go to bcbsm.com.
- Under the section *Looking for Health Care?*, click on the pull down menu *Choose a plan*
- Select *Community Blue/Blue Preferred PPO*
- Under the next pull down menu, *Select a specialty group*, click on *Immunization Pharmacies*.
(You may narrow your search by selecting the county from the next menu).
- Under the *Immunization Pharmacies* menu, you'll be able to choose from the list of pharmacies that will directly bill us for your vaccine or immunization.



Looking for Health Care?

Find a Michigan Doctor

SOM State Health Plan PPO

Immunization Pharmacies

Ingham

Search

Follow the doctor's orders when you take your medicine

Have you just started a new prescription drug regimen that requires you to take pills every day? If so, take them as prescribed by your doctor. Sounds easy, but only 50 percent of seniors adhere to long-term therapy for chronic illnesses. Remembering to take your medication every day can be a chore, but it's also very important for your health.

If you have a chronic disease such as asthma or diabetes, or suffer from infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, failure to take medication as directed by your physician can have devastating consequences on your health. While forgetting to take your over-the-counter allergy medicine can leave you with itchy eyes, forgetting to take your prescription asthma medication can send you to the hospital.

The first step to taking your medicines consistently is to know what you're taking and why. Speak with your physician so you have a better understanding of the function of each prescription.



Ask your physician...

- **What am I being treated for and what's the purpose of the medication?**
- **How does my medicine work with other medications I'm taking or foods I may eat?**

For example: Some medicines work best if you take them with food, and others work best if you take them at bedtime. And some medications have a different reaction if you take them with grapefruit juice.

- **What do I do if I miss a dose? What side effects could I have?**

It's important that you keep your doctor informed of how the medicine is working for you. It may be useful to ask your doctor for help in completing a chart on all of your medicines that includes the name of the medication, what the medication is being taken for, when to take it, what side effects to watch for, and whom to call if you have a problem.



If you have trouble remembering to take your medication, daily reminders are often helpful. Find the reminder habit that works for you and your schedule, and adjust them to suit your lifestyle.

Reminders...

Organize your medication

- Use a seven-day pill box to organize your medication. It'll help you see each dose and help you remember if you've taken your medication on time or on a particular day.
- Never put your medication in an unlabeled bottle or combine different medications in a single bottle. Even when you're familiar with what your medication looks like, it's easy to make mistakes.

Use alarms and alerts

- Set an alarm on a clock, watch or cell phone to remind yourself to take your medication.
- Try to take your medicine at the same time you do daily activities such as setting your alarm clock, making your morning coffee or brushing your teeth.

Write it down

- Write your medication schedule on a wall calendar near your medications.
- If you take several medications at different times, it might be helpful to list each medication and when you need to take it.

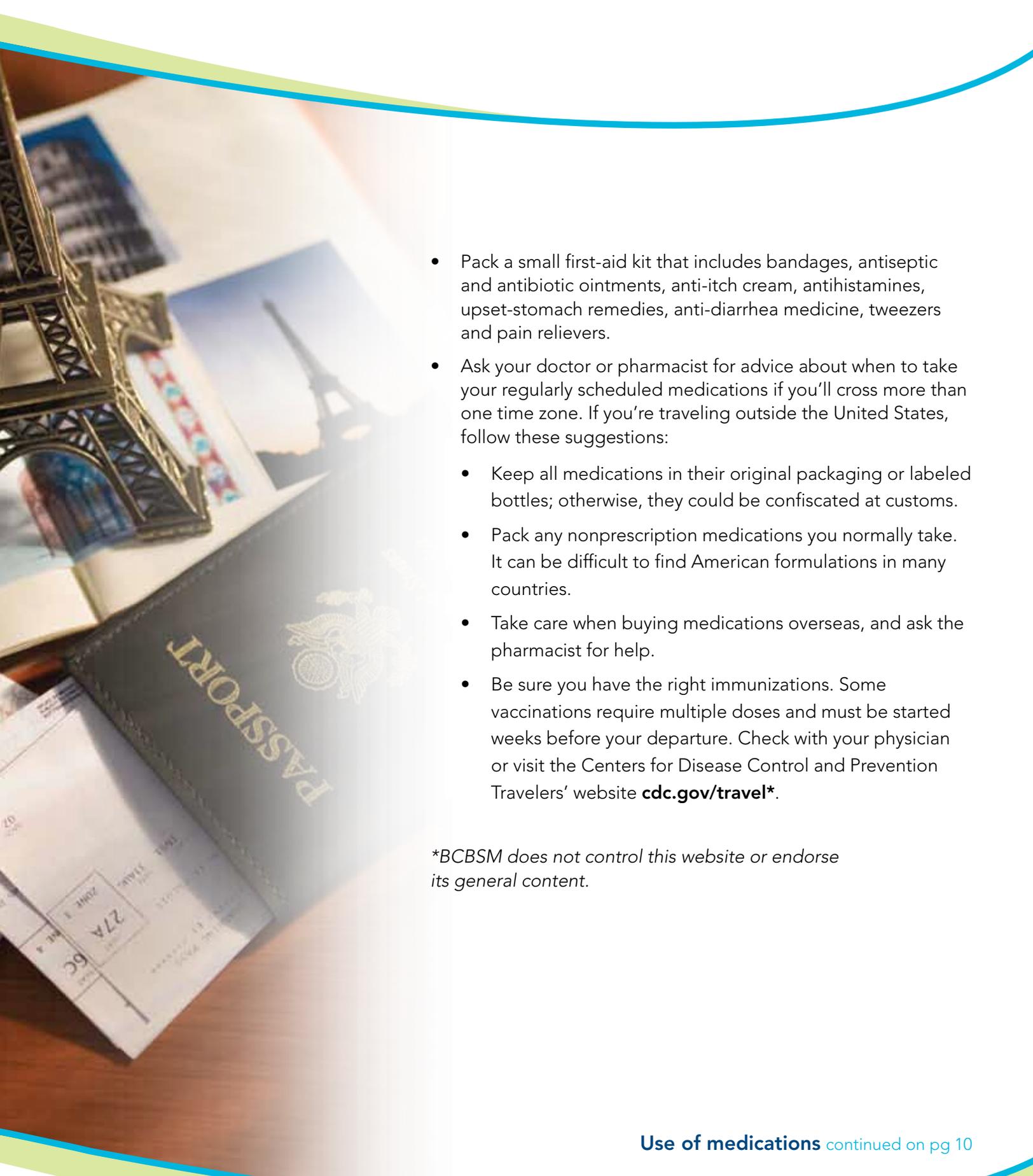
For more information, visit [*fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/ucm163959.htm](http://fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/ucm163959.htm)

Healthful travel tips

*Going away for vacation?
Don't leave your good health behind.*

Whether you're headed for Lake Michigan or Mount Kilimanjaro, the following tips can help ensure a healthy and happy vacation.

- Pack an adequate supply of medicines, and store them properly. Heat and humidity, for example, can affect many medications, so avoid keeping them in a beach bag, car trunk, glove compartment, or checked luggage.
- If you're carrying medications while traveling by plane, review the current medication guidelines by calling the Transportation Security Administration Contact Center toll free at 1-866-289-9673, or visit **tsa.gov***.
- Keep medicines in their original containers to ensure you have vital information, including medicine name, dosage, warnings and interactions. If you take multiple medications and use a pill dispenser, wait until you reach your destination to fill the dispenser.
- Check labels for warnings about how medications may increase your body's sensitivity to the sun, heat or cold. If you have a chronic health condition, check with your physician concerning the potential effect of conditions you may encounter while traveling.
- Always carry your BCBSM card, doctors' phone numbers and a list of medications and dietary supplements you take.
- Wear an identification bracelet with detailed medical information if you have a chronic or life threatening condition.



- Pack a small first-aid kit that includes bandages, antiseptic and antibiotic ointments, anti-itch cream, antihistamines, upset-stomach remedies, anti-diarrhea medicine, tweezers and pain relievers.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice about when to take your regularly scheduled medications if you'll cross more than one time zone. If you're traveling outside the United States, follow these suggestions:
 - Keep all medications in their original packaging or labeled bottles; otherwise, they could be confiscated at customs.
 - Pack any nonprescription medications you normally take. It can be difficult to find American formulations in many countries.
 - Take care when buying medications overseas, and ask the pharmacist for help.
 - Be sure you have the right immunizations. Some vaccinations require multiple doses and must be started weeks before your departure. Check with your physician or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Travelers' website cdc.gov/travel*.

**BCBSM does not control this website or endorse its general content.*



BCBSM on board for SIDS prevention

From two to 12 months old, a newborn is at the peak age for onset of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). SIDS is the sudden, unexpected death of an infant less than one year of age that resists explanation, even after a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of the clinical history, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In most SIDS cases, a seemingly healthy child is put to bed but is discovered lifeless with no pulse or respiration. 90 percent of SIDS cases occur in infants younger than six months of age. It's the third leading cause of infant mortality in the United States. The CDC also reports that more than 2,500 SIDS cases are reported each year. Although the overall rate of SIDS in the United States has declined by more than 50 percent since 1990, rates have declined less among African American and Native American infants. Preventing SIDS remains an important public health priority.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan is dedicated to improving the health of all Michigan residents. Keeping children healthy is one of our main concerns. As part of our social mission, our company has awarded a \$25,000 grant to support a community-based initiative called Infant Safe Sleep to educate new parents about the steps they can take to prevent SIDS and teach families how to provide a safe space for infants.

Michigan Blues President and CEO Daniel J. Loepp, a champion for the SIDS cause, was honored by Tomorrow's Child, an organization that provides needed counseling and support for families who have lost a child to SIDS. Tomorrow's Child also provides education, outreach, advocacy and research to keep babies healthy and safe during their first year of life.

Although the cause of SIDS is unknown, it's generally accepted that SIDS may be a reflection of multiple interacting factors. A leading hypothesis is that SIDS may reflect a delay in the development of nerve cells within the brain that are critical to normal heart and lung function. This delay can have damaging effects on the breathing, heart rate and blood pressure responses of the child.

Another leading theory is that some infants have a delay in their arousal reflexes. Arousal, in this context, refers to an infant's ability to awaken or respond to a variety of physiological stimuli. For example, a child sleeping facedown may move his or her face into a position in which the nose and mouth are completely obstructed. This may alter the levels of oxygen or carbon dioxide in the infant's blood. Normally, these changes would trigger arousal responses, prompting the infant to move his or her head to the side to alleviate this obstruction. A delay in their arousal reflex may not trigger the infant to move in time.

There's currently no way to predict which infants are at risk for SIDS. However, SIDS has been linked to certain risk factors. By eliminating or preventing these factors, you can reduce the threat of SIDS taking the life of your loved ones.

Steps to SIDS prevention

Here are some suggestions to keep your baby safe:

- Place your baby on his or her back to sleep.
- Avoid fluffy, loose bedding in your baby's sleep area.
- Be careful not to overheat your baby by overdressing or adding unnecessary covers.
- Keep all well-child appointments with your health care provider, including immunizations.
- Educate babysitters, day care providers, grandparents and everyone who cares for your baby about the risks and factors associated with SIDS.

For more information on SIDS, contact:

Tomorrow's Child
112 E. Allegan St., Suite 500
Lansing, MI 48933
1-800-331-7437 or 517-485-7437
tomorrowschildmi.org*

Or visit **cdc.gov/sids/index.htm***

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Top 10 ways to boost your workout

A proven way to improve your health is finding — or making — the time to exercise. But just going through the motions won't give you the health benefits you want. The following suggestions can help you improve your workout:

1. Change the mode or intensity of your training.

Repeating the same workout can get boring, and you're unlikely to improve because you're always using the same muscles. So, altering your routine will help you avoid conditioning plateaus and force your body to adapt to new movements and intensity levels. For example, if you walk or run, spend 10 percent more time doing the activity or increase your effort or speed by 10 percent. To change a resistance or weight routine, increase the number of reps or times you lift a weight, the number of sets you do or the weight you lift by 10 percent. Or, do a different set of exercises that work the same muscle groups.

2. Hire a personal trainer.

They're not just for the rich and famous anymore. Personal trainers are quite affordable. Some are available through your gym for an additional fee. Or go "halves" with a friend, and the two of you can work out for the price of one. When you workout with a certified personal trainer, you can focus on the exercise at hand, and let the trainer worry about the routine. A trainer will help you keep your workouts fresh and always progressing.

3. Eat properly and stay hydrated.

Without proper nutrition and fluid intake, you can't have a great workout. Your body needs these fuels to build muscle and repair damaged tissue.

4. Emphasize quality over quantity.

Although it may seem that working out more often or for longer periods of time would be the best way to get fit, shorter, but shorter more intense workouts may produce greater results.

5. Incorporate mind-body training.

Mind-body fitness routines can improve muscle strength, flexibility, balance and coordination as well as increase mental development and self-esteem. Try yoga, Pilates, tai chi and other martial arts training regimens.





6. Exercise at the right time for your body.

Work with your body's natural energy level, not against it. If you're a morning person, workout in the morning. Don't try this if you're a night-owl because you won't stay with it.

7. Get a workout partner.

Exercising with a partner makes you accountable to someone else for each workout and can improve your adherence to a program.

8. Emphasize breathing.

When strength training, take full breaths during each exercise, exhaling on the exertion and inhaling as you release. During cardiovascular exercise, full breaths will deliver as much oxygen as possible to the working muscles, making them more efficient.

9. Use a heart-rate monitor.

A heart-rate monitor is a great tool to gauge how hard your body is working and can help you stay within your target heart-rate training zone.

10. Listen to music.

Music can make a workout more fun and give you that extra burst of energy you need to work your hardest.

For more information, visit the American Council on Exercise at acefitness.org.



Blue Distinction Centers® for Specialty Care are experts in quality health care

When you're looking to buy a car, you look for a car with a good reputation. You'd probably be more interested in test driving a car that's been manufactured by a reputable name in the industry. You want a car that's reliable, efficient and safe, and has performance features that are important to you.

Why should your health care be any different? That's why Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network have awarded the national Blue Distinction Centers for Specialty Care designation to select Michigan hospitals. These hospitals have met strict requirements for delivering quality health care in specific specialties.

The Blue Distinction Centers for Specialty Care program recognizes top-performing specialty hospitals that meet national quality standards on specific procedures and outcomes. Hospitals recognized by this program are fully accredited, have proven experience performing specialty procedures and have demonstrated consistent high quality in several categories: delivery of care, patient safety, favorable patient outcomes and reduced

complications rates. The goal is to help you find hospitals that have demonstrated better overall outcomes (e.g., fewer medical complications, fewer readmissions and higher survival rates) in the delivery of specialty care.

Hospitals are recognized for their distinguished care in the areas of:

- Bariatric surgery
- Cardiac care
- Complex and rare cancers
- Knee and hip replacement
- Spinal surgery
- Transplants

Blue Distinction Centers for Specialty Care are simple to locate. Go to bcbsm.com/som. Link to bcbsm.com. Login at the Member Secured Services site. Go to the tab *Hospitals, physicians and medications*. Click on *Find a doctor*. Under *Hospitals*, click on *Blue Distinction Centers for Specialty Care*.

Selection criteria category	Examples include	Why this matters to you
Patient results (or patient outcomes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complication rates • Readmission rates • Mortality rate 	<p>Does the hospital do as well as other facilities?</p> <p>Facilities are evaluated on how well they do, overall, relative to their peers.</p>
Treatment expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physician credentials • Dedicated team focused on providing the particular area of specialty care • Length of time a facility has performed a procedure 	<p>Is the hospital an expert in the procedures performed?</p> <p>Processes like advanced training programs for physicians in certain specialty areas and having patient care teams dedicated to one type of specialty care may lead to better overall care and outcomes for patients.</p>
Procedure volume	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of times a particular procedure has been completed 	<p>How often has the procedure been performed at the hospital?</p> <p>Experience counts. Like the old adage, "Practice makes perfect," research has shown that the more a facility performs a particular procedure, the better the overall outcomes for patients. However, this does not always guarantee positive outcomes for individual patients.</p>
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of services provided (ER, diagnostic testing abilities) • Supporting departments (such as radiology, nutrition, social services and rehabilitation) • Use of clinical registry data systems 	<p>Does the hospital have what it takes for a positive outcome?</p> <p>Expert input and guidance suggest that for various specialty care services, a distinguished level of care and management of patients requires the availability of key clinical services, such as diagnostic, medical and collaborative services.</p>
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of evidence-based care (for example, use of beta blockers or aspirin for cardiac patients, which typically results in better outcomes) • Systematic follow-up of patient results after procedures • Quality improvement processes 	<p>Does the hospital consider research, patient expectations and overall skill to improve patient outcome?</p> <p>Adherence to evidence-based (or clinically based) care processes as well as a demonstrated focus on quality improvement often relates to improved overall outcomes.</p>

Note: Designation as Blue Distinction Centers means these facilities' overall experience and aggregate data met objective criteria established in collaboration with expert clinicians and leading professional organization recommendations. Individual outcomes may vary. To find out which services are covered under your policy at any facility, please call the customer service number on the back of your Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan ID card.

For Your Benefit

State of Michigan Retirees

MC B180 — Newsletter return only
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600 E. Lafayette Blvd.
Detroit, Michigan 48226-2998

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BLUE SHIELD
OF MICHIGAN

How to reach us

For benefit information or claim inquiries, call or write the BCBSM State of Michigan Customer Service Center.

To Call

1-800-843-4876

Our customer service representatives are available from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday excluding holidays.

To write

Please send all correspondence to:
State of Michigan Customer Service Center
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan
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