

Pharmacy Benefit Dimensions®

An Independent Health  company

PHARMACY BENEFITS NEWSLETTER • VOLUME 10, ISSUE 3

FALL 2014

Now is the time to get a flu shot

The holidays are approaching, football season is well under way and the leaves have fallen from the trees. The closer quarters mean that cold and flu will spread more easily than in summertime. For some of us, getting the run-of-the-mill cold is unavoidable, but there is one easy way to protect ourselves and family members against the flu: get a flu shot.

Who needs the flu shot?

Every year up to 20 percent of Americans come down with the flu. Most healthy people recover, but more than 100,000 people end up in the hospital from the illness and from flu-related complications. Nearly everyone can benefit from the flu vaccine, and people in these high-risk groups should be sure to get a shot:

- Everyone older than 6 months is recommended for flu vaccination with rare exception
- Children younger than 2 years should not receive the nasal spray vaccine
- Anyone ages 2 and older with a chronic illness such as heart, lung, or kidney disease; diabetes; or a weakened immune system
- Adults ages 65 and older
- Nursing home residents
- Women who are or may be pregnant during flu season
- People who take care of at-risk populations

It is important to get the flu vaccination every year because the virus may change year to year. The annual vaccination includes the most commonly anticipated influenza viruses for the upcoming flu season. Your primary care doctor normally has a supply of the flu vaccine, but you can also get your flu shot at drugstores, community centers, your place of employment and supermarkets.

Getting your vaccination at the pharmacy

Pharmacy Benefit Dimensions (PBD) contracts with more than 60,000 pharmacies across the country, including major pharmacy chains such as Rite-Aid, Walgreens, and CVS. Flu shots are administered at almost all major chains, as well as many independent pharmacies. Please remember to have your Pharmacy Benefit Dimensions ID card if you are receiving your vaccine at your local pharmacy.

Looking for the pharmacy closest to you? Visit the PBD website at www.pbdrx.com. Once there, click on "Find a Pharmacy," and search for the location closest to your home.

If you have questions regarding the flu vaccine or believe you may have the flu, contact your doctor.

Reminder: Don't forget your member ID card

Your Pharmacy Benefit Dimensions member ID card is an important part of receiving the care you need, when you need it. That is why it is essential to always carry your member ID card with you and show it when you're visiting your pharmacy. It is important that other family members on your plan carry their member ID cards, too. Also, changes in benefits may have occurred since the last time you visited your pharmacy.

As a reminder, when you visit your pharmacy after January 1, please show your ID card to make sure that your current information is on file.

If you have misplaced your ID card or if you need additional cards, please call Pharmacy Benefit Dimensions Member Services Department at **(716) 635-7880** or **1-888-878-9172**. TTY users: **1-800-432-1110**.

Please direct questions or comments you have about the Pharmacy Benefit Dimensions newsletter to:

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Being prepared for food allergies and anaphylaxis

Food allergy and anaphylaxis continue to be an ongoing issue for millions throughout the country. Anaphylaxis is a severe, potentially life-threatening allergic reaction which can occur within seconds or minutes of exposure to an allergen. The most common triggers are certain medications, foods (e.g., peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, milk and eggs) and insect stings (e.g., bees, yellow jackets, wasps and hornets.) Symptoms can include skin reactions, swollen tongue or throat causing troubled breathing, a weak and rapid pulse, nausea, dizziness or fainting.

Because anaphylaxis is unpredictable, it is important for people living with potentially life threatening allergies to have an anaphylaxis action plan in place. In addition to avoiding known allergens, many members find it necessary to have immediate access to epinephrine auto injectors (i.e., EpiPen®, Auvi-Q™) for themselves or their children.

If you have an epinephrine auto injector on hand, it should never be stored in a place that is too hot or cold, as that may cause the epinephrine to be oxidized and inactivated. It is also important to regularly check your product's expiration date, as medication effectiveness can decrease with the expiration of active ingredients. Expiration dates can be found directly on the barrel of the EpiPen® or etched on the back (near the top) of your Auvi-Q™. For example: OCT 14 = October 31, 2014. If your injector has passed its expiration date, please speak to your medical provider to request a replacement prescription.

If your child suffers from life-threatening allergies, remember to speak with your child's school about his or her condition. Provide the school nurse with your child's history of anaphylaxis and the specific trigger(s) to which he or she is allergic. School regulations for carrying epinephrine auto-injectors vary and should be discussed with school personnel.

Hydrocodone combination products schedule change affects fill rules

In an effort to combat prescription drug abuse, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) recently ruled that Hydrocodone Combination Products (HCPs) will move from a Schedule III drug to a Schedule II drug and will no longer be eligible for refills. HCPs include prescription pain medications such as Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen, Lortab, Norco and Vicodin. While HCPs have been a Schedule II drug in New York state since February 2013, this move by the DEA affects users of HCPs nationwide.

What this change means to you

Due to this move to Schedule II, all prescriptions for HCPs must be written by the prescriber and cannot be faxed, phoned in or refilled. In addition, there will be no refills given for HCPs, and every fill will require a new hard copy prescription from the prescribing physician or medical provider. Members who obtain their HCPs by mail-order must send a new prescription monthly.

For members outside of New York state

The DEA has provided a federal exemption allowing for six month of refills for HCP prescriptions written before October 6, 2014. Therefore, if you had a prescription filled for an HCP and it has authorized refills, Pharmacy Benefit Dimensions will honor the refills as long as they occur before April 8, 2015. **Please note that this exemption varies by state.**

As always, we encourage you to speak to your doctor or pharmacist should you have any questions or concerns or require a new prescription.

New generic medications now available

There are many generic medications currently available that can help prevent or lessen the risks for chronic conditions such as heart disease, hypertension and asthma. These drugs are safe and effective alternatives to brand-name drugs. In fact, they're identical to their brand-name counterparts in terms of active ingredients, dosage and quality.

Generics do differ in one big way: cost. They typically are less expensive than brand-names drugs, and the savings can be significant. Going generic could save you between 30 and 80 percent.

For your reference, here are some brand-name medications that recently have had a new generic alternative released to the marketplace:

Brand Name	Generic Name	Category
Oxsorelan Ultra	methoxalen	Dermatological
Actonel	risedronate	Hormones/Steroids (osteoporosis)
Diovan	valsartan	Cardiovascular
Nuedexta	dextromethorphan; quinidine sulfate	Other CNS/Autonomic (nervous system)
Frova	frovatriptan succinate	Pain (Migraine)
Tarceva	erlotinib	Cancer
Moxatag	amoxicillin	Infection (antibiotic)