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APWU Health Plan
800-222-2798
www.apwuhp.com



The Health Connection

Rated Tops for Member Satisfaction

APWU HEALTH PLAN HAS CONSISTENTLY BEEN ONE of the highest rated health plans in the Federal Government's comparison of health plans in the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program. Again in 2006, members gave the Health Plan top ratings in member satisfaction.

We'll be working to ensure quality this year and in years to come because your satisfaction is our number one priority.



	APWU Health Plan 2006 %	HEDIS Benchmark* 2005 %	FFS Plan Average** 2006 %
Overall Plan Satisfaction	86.8	63.4	75.7
Getting Needed Care	88.4	79.6	85.6
Getting Care Quickly	85.3	79.5	83.4
How Well Doctors Communicate	94.7	92.2	93.8
Customer Service	72.8	70.4	71.6
Claims Processing	95.1	87.8	92.9

* National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) average for commercial plans

** Fee-for-Service average for commercial plans

Each year, APWU Health Plan conducts a Member Satisfaction Survey under the direction of the Office of Personnel Management. Our cover article lets you know the survey results for 2006, and also how APWU Health Plan compares to National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) benchmarks and averages of other commercial health plans. We're pleased with the excellent ratings, and will continue to make member satisfaction our top priority.

Because August is National Immunization Awareness Month, we've included an article on guarding against serious diseases through immunizations. One of the best ways to improve the health outlook of your family is to protect them with immunizations, and there is no better time than now to get immunizations up-to-date.

Every year *U.S. News and World Report* evaluates hospitals across the country, and picks an Honor Roll of those singled out for particular distinction. We're pleased that all of the hospitals on the Honor Roll are part of the APWU Health Plan's Preferred Provider Organization (PPO). The Health Plan also has an online Hospital Quality Guide that compares the quality and safety of hospitals across the country to help you find those that are best in your area. You'll find articles on both in this edition of *The HealthConnection*.

Also in this issue, you'll find information on lowering blood pressure by eating a healthy diet and getting more exercise, with some common-sense ways to achieve both. And because medication mistakes happen throughout the healthcare system, we have included tips on preventing mistakes with medications.

Sincerely,

Director

William J. Kaczor, Jr.

National Immunization Awareness Month

AUGUST IS NATIONAL IMMUNIZATION Awareness Month, a good reminder that one of the best things you can do to take charge of your health is to prevent preventable diseases with immunizations. If you haven't kept an immunization record, now is an excellent time to start. The following immunizations are recommended for adults by the U. S. Preventive Services Task Force; and recommended for children by the Centers for Disease Control and American Academy of Pediatrics:

Adults:

- Flu shot every year starting at age 50
- Tetanus-diphtheria shot every 10 years
- Pneumonia shot once at age 65
- Talk to your doctor to see if you need hepatitis B shots

Children:

- Hepatitis B: at birth, 1-4 months, and 6-18 months
- Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (whooping cough): at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 15-18 months, and 4-6 years
- Tetanus-Diphtheria: at 11-12 years
- Inactivated Poliovirus: at 2 months, 4 months, 6-18 months and 4-6 years

- Haemophilus Influenza Type B: at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, and 12-15 months. Depending on type of vaccine used, 6-month dose may not be needed
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (German measles): at 12-15 months and 4-6 years. Children who have not previously received the second dose should have it by 11-12 years
- Chickenpox (Varicella): at 12-18 months if your child lacks a reliable history of chickenpox
- Pneumococcal disease (PCV vaccine): at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months and 12-15 months
- Hepatitis A: 12-23 months
- Influenza: A recent recommendation is for all children age 6-23 months to receive an annual influenza vaccine
- Talk to your doctor about immunizations; and find complete information at www.aap.org and <http://www.cdc.gov/nip/recs/child-schedule.htm>.

APWU Health Plan covers immunizations for adults; and childhood immunizations are 100% covered for children up to age 22 when PPO providers are used.



Prescription for Safety

A NEW REPORT FROM THE INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE, the independent organization chartered by Congress to advise the government, says that 1.5 million Americans are injured by drug errors each year in hospitals, doctors' offices and nursing homes. And recently, the U. S. Food and Drug Administration and the Institute for Safe Medication Practices launched a nationwide education campaign aimed at doctors, medical writers, FDA staff and the pharmaceutical industry to educate them about common but preventable medication mistakes caused by the use of unclear medical abbreviations.

Medication errors occur throughout the healthcare system. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality suggests these steps you can take to help prevent medication errors:

- Ask questions if you have doubts or concerns about your medicines
- Write a list of all the medicines you take and bring it to your medical appointments, including hospital visits. This includes over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.
- Make sure your medicine is what the doctor ordered and know how to take it correctly. Does a refill look different than the one you've taken before? Does it seem different than what your doctor wrote on your prescription?
- Ask about side effects and what to avoid while taking the medication. Read the label and other information you receive when you get your prescription, including warnings and dosage. APWU Health Plan's mail order program includes written instructions with every prescription.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist to see whether you need laboratory tests to monitor how your drugs are working. Some drugs may affect your liver or other organs and require regular tests to make sure there are no harmful side effects.

Health Plan Champions Hospital Quality

APWU Health Plan believes that tools which allow you to compare hospital quality are important incentives for improving the quality of health-care. These tools help you learn what hospitals provide the highest quality in your area, and also put pressure on hospitals to improve their performance. The information you obtain from hospital quality comparisons can be discussed with your doctor so that you can make the best decisions about hospital care.

APWU Health Plan provides an online Hospital Quality Guide to help. Hospitals are rated for the quality they provide to patients, and the guide also includes a **comparison of patient safety**. Check out the guide at www.apwuhp.com, click on the High Option PPO Directory, and find the Hospital Quality Guide at the top of the page.

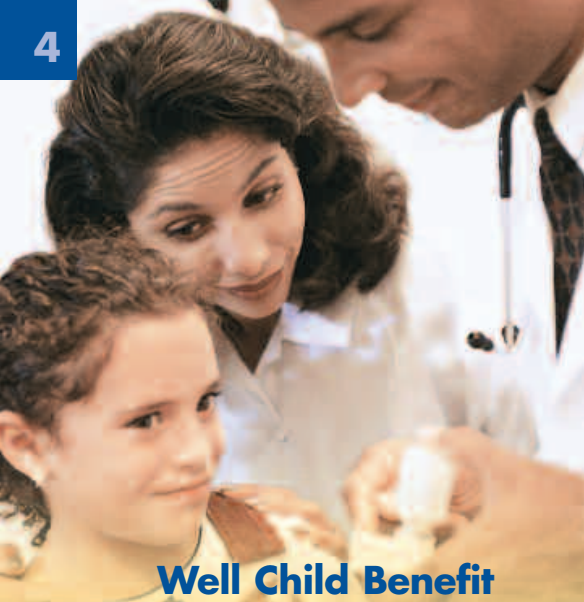
Being informed gives you power, and can have an impact on medical outcomes. How does your hospital compare?

Best Hospitals in PPO Network

Every year, *U.S. News & World Report* rates hospitals across the country and picks the best for an "Honor Roll". Honor Roll hospitals demonstrate broad expertise by ranking at or near the top in at least six specialties. For 2006, all fourteen hospitals on the Honor Roll are part of APWU Health Plan's Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) network. The fourteen hospitals are:

- 1 Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, MD
- 2 Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota
- 3 Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, Ohio
- 4 Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts
- 5 UCLA Medical Center, Los Angeles, California
- 6 New York-Presbyterian University Hospital, New York, NY
- 7 Duke University Medical Center, Durham, NC
- 8 Barnes-Jewish Hospital, St. Louis, Missouri
- 9 University of California, San Francisco Medical Center, San Francisco, CA
- 10 University of Washington Medical Center, Seattle, Washington
- 11 Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts
- 12 University of Michigan Hospital, Ann Arbor, Michigan
- 13 Stanford Hospital and Clinics, Stanford, CA
- 14 University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA

What's New



Well Child Benefit

With summer vacations almost over and the beginning of school approaching, it's a good time to put your children's health care needs on your to-do list, and schedule any check-ups and needed immunizations. APWU Health Plan's Well Child benefit helps with 100% coverage of immunizations, physical exams and lab tests for your children.

The Health Plan covers recommended immunizations at **100%** for children through age twenty-two if a preferred provider is used. Physical examinations and laboratory tests for children through age 12 are also **covered at 100%**. An eye examination for amblyopia and strabismus is **covered at 100%** for children age two through six.

It's the right time to get your family's health back on schedule. We're here to help you keep your children well.

Lowering Blood Pressure



IF YOU'RE ONE OF THE 65 MILLION Americans, one in three, with high blood pressure, the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) says studies show that the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet and exercise can significantly lower high blood pressure. (Some people may need medications if diet and exercise do not control blood pressure). NHLBI suggests beginning with small changes:

- If you eat only one or two servings of vegetables per day, try adding one additional serving at lunch and another at dinner
- Gradually switch to fat-free or low-fat milk and reduce servings of soda or other sweetened beverages
- When you shop, read the Nutrition Facts label on food products to find sodium content, and choose foods lowest in salt and sodium
- To begin exercising more, start with a simple 15-minute walk and build up
- Choose whole grain foods, such as whole wheat bread or whole grain cereals to add minerals and fiber

You'll find a link to NHLBI, with the DASH eating plan and other information on lowering high blood pressure, on the Health Plan's website (www.apwuhp.com). Click Health Care and Patient Safety Tips and check the links at the bottom of the page. You can also find the DASH diet at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/index.htm.

Only rely on APWU Health Plan's Brochure (RI 71-004) as the official statement of benefits, limitations and exclusions.

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APWU Health Plan
799 Cromwell Park Drive, Suites K-Z
Glen Burnie, MD 21061
www.apwuhp.com



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