H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu)

The big question today is not “What’s happening with the economy?”, but “What is happening with the Swine Flu?” People hear a cough and start panicking. It’s good to know the facts and use them to dispel any myths about signs, prevention, and treatment.

What is H1N1 (swine flu)?
H1N1 (referred to as "swine flu" early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person to person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread.

How does H1N1 virus spread?
Spread of H1N1 virus is thought to occur in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

What are the signs and symptoms of this virus?
Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. There have also been a significant number of infected people who have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

Are Blue Shield members covered for a vaccination?
Blue Shield of California will cover the administrative costs of the H1N1 virus (swine flu) vaccine for CalPERS members, regardless of which plan they have. Blue Shield will waive prior authorizations, copays, and deductibles for office visits when members go to an in-network provider to get H1N1 vaccinations. We will also provide prescription drug coverage for Tamiflu (oseltamivir) and Relenza (zanamivir) – the two anti-viral drugs used to treat flu symptoms. Members should contact their primary care physician to schedule their H1N1 vaccination.

Who should receive the H1N1 vaccine?
The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has recommended that
certain groups of the population receive the H1N1 vaccine. These individuals include pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old, and people ages of 25 through 64 years of age who are at higher risk for H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

Tips to avoid catching the flu

Everyday precautions to stay healthy:

• Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
• Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol based hands cleaners are also effective.
• Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread that way.
• Stay home if you get sick. CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
• Try to avoid close contact with individuals who are sick.

Use our H1N1 flyers to help communicate this information to your employees: go to blueshieldca.com/calpershbo and click on H1N1 flu communications. We also have travel-sized hand sanitizers for you – just call your Account Manager or Service Representative.

Content source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu

Expanded HBO Priority Line hours

Your Priority Line is now open Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm at (800) 837-4251. Please note that this is a dedicated line for just CalPERS Health Benefits Officers and should not be shared with your employees. Your Employees can contact Blue Shield of California CalPERS dedicated line Monday through Friday from 7 am-7pm.

Healthy eating for the holidays

The holidays are here. For most of us, this means fun with friends and family, and feasting on way too much food. We rationalize that we’ll get back to healthy eating in January when we kick-off our exercise routine as part of our New Year’s resolution. The resolution that we rarely fulfill.

So the question is whether healthy eating habits can simply be maintained during the holidays. During a family feast where mom is thrusting a second or even third helping of her scrumptious sausage cornbread stuffing and Nana is doling out oversized portions of her pumpkin cheesecake. How do you keep from being stuffed like the turkey on the table?

These tips can help you to make healthy choices during the holidays – and throughout the year.

1. **Focus on the people.** Concentrate on socializing instead of eating. Sit near and spend time talking with relatives and old friends instead of sitting within arms reach of the hors d’oeuvres.

2. **Plan before you eat.** Don’t arrive on an empty stomach and have a plan prior to approaching any food. Weight Watchers Head of Training, Palma Posillico, suggests “Mental

viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

5. **I can get H1N1 from my pet.**

No. Available evidence suggests that transmission has been from ill humans to their companion animals. No evidence is available to suggest that animals are infecting humans with the H1N1 virus.

Content source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu

2010 brings change for pharmacy and when talking to your doctor online

**PHARMACY:** New for 2010, CalPERS’ Blue Shield members will save money by filling their maintenance medications prescriptions through our contracted mail-service pharmacy, PrimeMail®. Maintenance drugs, such as statins, ACE inhibitors and beta-blockers are used on an ongoing basis for the treatment of long-term conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes or high cholesterol.

Using the mail-service pharmacy will cost the same amount as a retail pharmacy. Plus, members will get more medication for the same copay and free standard shipping. The copay for maintenance medications will increase if members continue to fill them at a retail pharmacy 90 days after the first fill.
Rehearsing." Imagine an event that you know will be challenging and picture in your mind what you will do to successfully handle it. For example, envision the buffet line. Rehearse how you will fill your plate to eat healthily without feeling deprived – 3/4 full of healthy choices, the other 1/4 of your indulgence items. Remember that it’s okay to have some holiday treats, just spend your calories wisely.

3. **You have the power.** Instead of asking the hostess what you can bring, offer up a healthy suggestion or two of your own. *Cooking Light* has some great “light” holiday recipes.

4. **Choose healthy holiday foods.** Steer toward foods that are less processed and more wholesome. Choose turkey or chicken breast over beef prime rib. Choose plain potatoes or steamed vegetables over stuffing.

5. **Put down the wineglass and remember the H2O.** Water will not only help keep you full, but will help to keep the calories down. Alcohol provides a lot of calories and no nutritional benefit. The number of calories in an alcoholic drink depends on the amount of alcohol it contains. The following are estimates of the number of calories in alcoholic drinks.

   - Beer: 148 calories in 12 fl oz (355 ml)
   - "Lite" beer: 99 calories in 12 fl oz (355 ml)
   - Wine: 106 calories in 5 fl oz (148 ml)
   - Gin, vodka, whiskey, and other "hard" liquor [1.5 fl oz (44 ml)]:
     - 97 calories (80 proof)
     - 110 calories (90 proof)
     - 124 calories (100 proof)

Use the power of the Web

Join us for an informative webinar to learn about:

- the difference between Access + and Net Value HMOs, specifically the cost savings
- how to self refer to a specialist
- how to save money with our PrimeMail mail-in prescription plan

**RSVP today** for webinars in December or January or email us with any questions.

[Link to RSVP](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FFFNVBM)

Healthy employees make happy employees

This isn’t just a motto at Encina Wastewater Authority. It’s a way of life. The HBO at Encina Wastewater Authority, Nancy Avila, believes in making employees aware of ‘healthy options.’ It’s the small things her agency can do for their employees that makes the big difference. This means EWA offers numerous wellness programs like providing three free gym visits through a local gym and a Wellness Newsletter in every paycheck focused on health in every paycheck with tips
By getting a regular exam, you can nip your health problems in the bud. If your doctor spots an odd looking mole, it can be removed before you have problems with skin cancer. If he notices that your blood pressure is too high, he can suggest a diet and fitness plan to help reduce it before you have to go on maintenance medication or even have a heart attack.

Also, when you get your physical, your doctor will ask you about your family's health history. If your family has a history of certain diseases or health problems, your doctor can give you guidance on how you can reduce your risk of suffering those ailments.

Save money. While we sometimes avoid the doctor because we don’t want to pay for an appointment, if a doctor can nip a problem in the bud before it gets serious, you may save money on medical bills down the road. And, as always, preventive care appointments have no copay.

Establish baselines. If you haven’t been to the doctor in a while, getting a physical will establish baselines for things like your weight, blood pressure, and cholesterol. Having these baselines will help your doctor gauge your health’s subsequent progression or regression. You can also use these numbers when you register with Healthy Lifestyle Rewards in January to earn $50.

Develop a relationship with your doctor. If you don’t see the doctor regularly, you often don’t have a doctor with whom we’ve developed a trusting relationship. But having a doctor that you can trust can ensure that you get the best care possible. First, you’re more likely to open up to doctors that you have a good relationship with, which means the doctor will get the information he needs to make a correct diagnosis when things are wrong. Second, having a regular doctor means you’ll have someone who knows your health history well enough that they don’t have to re-invent the wheel every time they see you. Finally, when you have a doctor you feel comfortable with, you’ll be less hesitant to go see him when you concerned about a health issue.

How Often Should You Get a Physical

- **If you're in your 20's**... every five years.
- **If you're in your 30's**... every five years.
- **If you're in your 40's**... every year.
- **50 and above**... every year.

It is recommended women have an annual pelvic exam and pap smear every 1-2 years under 40 and every year 40 and over.

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