

ECFE classes make learning fun!

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is a program for parents and children during the years from birth to kindergarten.

ECFE is a fun, informal place to meet, learn and play with other parents and children. The program provides quality learning opportunities and resources for young families.

Registration for ECFE classes is available through your school district. First Plan Blue will help pay your tuition. Tell the ECFE coordinator when you register that you are a First Plan Blue member and you'll get a discount.



Childbirth education classes help you prepare for parenthood

Whether you're eagerly planning for your baby's birth or worrying about labor and delivery, you'll benefit from a childbirth education class. These classes are designed to make your pregnancy, labor, delivery and care of your newborn easier for you and your family.

Childbirth education classes offered by area hospitals are a covered benefit. Show your member ID card when you enroll and ask the provider to bill First Plan Blue. Your doctor can help you find a class, or call your local hospital to find out when and where the classes are offered.



Winter 2004
Volume 3, Number 1

Together for Better Health



State's changes affect First Plan Blue members

As many of you know, in 2003 the State of Minnesota changed eligibility, benefits and co-pays for many people enrolled in MinnesotaCare and PMAP/PGAMC. These changes took effect last October and affect a number of First Plan Blue members.

As a result of these changes, PMAP/PGAMC members must pay a \$3 copay to their clinic for each office visit that's not for preventive care. Copays also are required for emergency room visits that aren't emergencies, and for prescriptions for many members.

Note: If you are in one of the following groups, you do not have copays:

- Pregnant women
- Children under the age of 21
- People in hospice care
- People in the Refugee Medical Assistance Program
- People residing in nursing homes or long-term care facilities.

Women who become pregnant are placed in special benefit groups within PMAP/PGAMC and MinnesotaCare. If you are pregnant, it's up to you to contact your county worker (PMAP and PGAMC) or MinnesotaCare to be sure you receive all of the benefits available to pregnant women.

A new "limited benefit" plan was added under MinnesotaCare that puts a limit of \$5,000 per year on outpatient and prescription drug coverage. There are a number of services that the Limited Benefit Plan does not cover. Please refer to the Certificate of Coverage Addendum included in this packet for more details. Or call Customer Service at 1-800-635-4159 or 724-3083 for more information about coverage for specific services.

We know health benefits can be confusing at times. We want you to understand your coverage. If you have any questions, call First Plan Blue Customer Service at 724-3083 or 1-800-635-4159. The TTY number is 218-727-9870.

Together for Better Health



For a healthier life, become a partner with your doctor and your health plan.

This newsletter shows you how to make the most of your health care partnership with First Plan Blue.



Your new ID card

Your new ID card is in the packet with this newsletter. Check it to be sure the information is correct. Does it list the clinic you want to go to? If not, call Customer Service.

Always carry your First Plan Blue ID card with you. Important phone numbers are listed on the back. If you need emergency or urgent care when you're outside of Minnesota, call the Access Blue number on the back of the card to find a Blue Cross and Blue Shield provider. The small suitcase on the front of the card tells providers how to bill correctly for your care.

Have a coverage question?

Call First Plan Blue Customer Service for answers to coverage questions. We're open 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday.
724-3083 or 1-800-635-4159
218-727-9870 (TTY)

Have a health question?

If you're not sure whether you need to see a doctor, call FirstHelp™ at 1-800-622-9524. Specially trained nurses will help you.

This packet includes several important items:

- ✓ **Your new ID card. Destroy your old card and start using your new one right away.**
- ✓ **Two amendments to your health care coverage. One explains the state's changes to your plan. The other explains a change in your pharmacy network. You can call the Select Pharmacy number on the back of your ID card to find a network pharmacy.**
- ✓ **News about the Blueprint for Health® stop-smoking program available at no cost to you.**



Healthy Living

Taking good care of yourself is the best way to stay healthy, plus you'll feel and look better, too. Good nutrition and exercise are important to your good health. You can involve your whole family in making changes for the better.

Nutrition

In general, a healthy diet is one that cuts back on fatty foods in favor of more fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Start with these simple ideas.

- Keep a bowl of fresh fruit available. If it's there, you're more likely to eat it.
- Plan ahead for routine meals and snacks. You'll achieve a more balanced, healthier diet.
- Eat breakfast. Spreading your food intake over the day is the best way to burn calories.
- Buy a healthy cookbook or food magazine, or check them out of the library. If you like to cook, this can help inspire you to cook healthier meals.
- Avoid eating in front of the TV or while busy with other activities.
- When you do have a treat like chips, cookies or ice cream, eat only one serving, eat it slowly and enjoy it!

Talk with your health care provider if you are concerned about your eating habits or weight.



Exercise

You don't have to join a gym or spend any money to exercise. Look for ways to be more active throughout the day. Try these activities to add more movement to your daily life:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Make sure the stairs are well lit.
- Get off the bus one stop early if you are in an area safe for walking.
- Park the car farther away from entrances to stores or movie theaters.
- Take a short walk around the block with family, friends or coworkers.
- Take a walk after dinner instead of watching TV.
- In bad weather, walk around in a mall.

Walking is the most popular form of exercise in the United States. It's convenient, cheap and it requires no special skills. Walking might not feel like a workout, but the health benefits can be huge. Keep safety in mind when you plan your route and the time of your walk.



Be a role model for your children

If your kids see you being physically active and having fun, they are more likely to be active and stay active throughout their lives. Involve the whole family in activities like hiking, biking, dancing, basketball or skating. Focus on fun. You can do a lot of walking during trips to the park or playground. Include children in household activities like dog-walking or snow-shoveling. Limit your children's TV and computer time. Encourage your children to be physically active every day.



Helpful advice from First Plan Blue

Q. Is it too late for flu shots?

A. Flu season runs through May, so it is definitely not too late for a flu shot. Call your clinic to be sure vaccine is available and to set up an appointment. Older adults and all children, especially those ages 6-23 months, should be vaccinated. It's also important for parents and siblings of younger babies, and others living in the house, to be vaccinated.

Plan ahead now for the next flu season by marking your October calendar with a reminder to get a flu shot. Many clinics have special walk-in times in the fall that make getting a flu shot quick and convenient.

YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH

More on cold & flu season

During cold and flu season, it's important for children under age 5 to be up-to-date on all their shots, especially the pneumococcal vaccine. Infection with the pneumococcal bacteria can cause serious illnesses like pneumonia, meningitis, sinusitis, ear infections and blood infection. Ask your health care provider for details.

Did you know that the best way to prevent the spread of colds and flu is to wash hands often? It's true!

Are you ready for September?

Beginning in September, several new vaccine rules go into effect for school and childcare. For example, children ages 18 months to 5 years who are enrolled in child care, and children entering kindergarten and 7th grade, will need proof that they have had chicken pox, or have been vaccinated against it. Other rules apply to the MMR vaccine, tetanus and the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine. Check with your clinic to be sure your children are up to date on the new rules.

Some clinics give parents a personal record card for each child so parents can provide dates of shots to school and child care. If you have a card, make sure it's updated with each shot.

Lead tests are important for children's health

Childhood lead poisoning is a major community health problem. High blood lead levels can affect intelligence, behavior and development. Lead poisoning can cause learning disabilities, brain or kidney damage, seizures and even death.

Ask your doctor about having your child tested for lead, especially at 12 and 24 months. If you live in a house or apartment built before 1978, you can take extra steps to reduce lead exposure:

- Frequently wash your child's hands, pacifiers and toys.
- Use only cold water from the tap for drinking, cooking and making formula. Hot water is more likely to contain higher levels of lead.
- Talk to your state or local health department about testing paint or dust from your home.

Quit smoking – today!

More than 3,000 people in Minnesota have quit smoking using the BluePrint for Health® stop-smoking program. You can quit, too! Call today for advice on how to quit smoking at your own pace: 1-800-835-0704.

Attention. If you want free help translating this information, call First Plan Blue at 1-800-635-4159.

ملاحظة: إذا أردت مساعدة مجانية في ترجمة هذه المعلومات، فاتصل على الرقم الموجود أعلاه.

កំណត់សម្គាល់: បើអ្នកចង់បានជំនួយឥតគិតថ្លៃក្នុងការបកប្រែព័ត៌មាននេះទៅជាភាសាដទៃ សូមទូរស័ព្ទ ទៅលេខទៅខាងលើ។

Pažnja. Ako vam je potrebna besplatna pomoć za prevod ove informacije, nazovite gornji broj.

Ceeb toom. Yog koj xav tau kev pab txhais cov xov no dawb, thov hu rau tus xov tooj saud.

ໂປຼດຊາບ. ຖ້າຫາກທ່ານຕ້ອງການ ການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອ ໃນການແປ ຂໍ້ຄວາມດັ່ງກ່າວນີ້ຝຣັ່, ຈິ່ງ ໂທ ຕາມເລກໂທ ທີ່ຢູ່ຂ້າງເທິງນີ້.

Hubaddhu. Yoo akka odeeffannoon kun sii hiikamu gargaarsa tolaa feeta ta'e, lakkoofsa armaa olii bilbili.

Внимание. Если вам нужна бесплатная помощь в переводе этой информации, позвоните по указанному выше телефону.

Ogow. Haddii aad dooneyso in lagaa kaalmeeoyo tarjamadda macluumaadkani oo lacag la'aan ah, wac lambarka kore.

Atención. Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para traducir esta información, llame al número que aparece más arriba.

Chú Ý. Nếu quý vị cần dịch thông tin này miễn phí, xin gọi số nêu trên.

This information is available in other forms to people with disabilities by calling (218) 724-3083 (voice), 1-800-635-4159 (toll free), (218) 727-9870 (TTY), 711, or through the Minnesota Relay Service at 1-877-627-3848 (speech to speech relay service).

First Plan Blue is administered by First Plan of Minnesota, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

FirstHelp™ is a trademark of McKesson Health Solutions, LLC. Blue Cross, Blue Shield, and the Cross and Shield Symbols are registered trademarks of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans.