



Health & Wellness

Fall 2024

Hello Fall!

Welcome to the Fall/Winter edition of Health & Wellness, a digital publication designed specifically for members of the CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield Community Health Plan Maryland (CareFirst CHPMD). This issue is full of helpful hints for keeping you and your family active and healthy during this cold, but festive time of the year. You'll also find useful information about your plan and tips on making the most of all your benefits.

We hope you enjoy this issue!

With Care



Important notice about your vision benefit

The customer service telephone number for your vision services has changed to 800-730-8530.

CareFirst CHPMD MyHealth Portal

Want instant access to your plan information? It's easy!

Through MyHealth Portal, members can easily access information 24/7. You can:

- View benefits
- Check claim status
- Check approvals
- Request an ID card
- Update demographics
- Log in as a member



To learn more or register, visit

carefirstchpmd.com/for-members/myhealth-portal.

Please note that by using MyHealth Portal you agree to the Terms of Use. Use of this portal does not confirm plan enrollment.

Please call our Member Services Department at **800-730-8530** to confirm enrollment status. Portal access may take up to 5-7 business days.



Renewing your Medicaid benefits

Do you or a family member currently have health insurance through Medicaid or the Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP)? If so, your Medicaid renewal will not be automatic this year—even if it was last year.

When it's your turn to renew, you'll receive a notice in the mail or through your online account. You'll have 45 days to respond, so don't wait!

Make sure the contact information you have on file with MCHP is up-to-date. Log in to your account at marylandhealthconnection.gov or call 855-642-8572 to get started.

Staying Active in Colder Months

Transitioning from summer to fall can change the way we exercise and stay active. Cooler days and less sunlight can make it more challenging to stay motivated. Following these tips can help keep you on the right track!

- Find a physical activity you enjoy doing that doesn't feel like exercise, like dancing or bowling.
- Instead of choosing a weight loss goal, choose one that focuses on overcoming a new activity this season, like training for a marathon or indoor cycling.
- The fall is a great time to take the family to farms and enjoy the festivals, pumpkin patches and animals—all while getting in your steps.
- Holiday parties and family gatherings can easily go to your waistline. Have a plan to manage your weight that's sustainable and focused on long term goals.
- Get plenty of rest and stay hydrated. This sounds easy, but often we become so busy that we neglect ourselves and forget to do these two basic things.



Pharmacy Corner

Understanding opioids and alternatives

Prescription opioids can be used to help relieve moderate to severe pain and are often prescribed following a surgery or injury, or for certain health conditions. While these medications can be an important part of treatment, they also carry serious risks of addiction, accidental overdose, and death.

The long-term use of opioids can also lead to tolerance (needing more of the medication for the same pain relief) and physical dependence (experiencing symptoms of withdrawal when a medication is stopped). Even when taken as directed, the use of prescription opioids can have several side effects like constipation, nausea, vomiting, dry mouth, sleepiness, dizziness, confusion, depression, irritability, itching, and difficulty in breathing.

What treatment options don't involve opioids?

Chronic pain can often be managed without opioids, and many other options have been shown to work better with fewer side effects. Examples include:

- Over-the-counter medications like Tylenol (acetaminophen), Advil (ibuprofen) and Aleve (naproxen)
- Non-opioid prescriptions such as lidocaine and Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)
- Physical therapy and exercise
- Some medications that are also used for depression or seizures

Learn more

For more information, visit our website at carefirstchpmd.com/find-a-drug-or-pharmacy.



Access to Utilization Management (UM) department

CareFirst CHPMD staff are available to answer members calls Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. ET. CareFirst CHPMD staff identify themselves by name, title, and name of organization when placing or receiving a call. After normal business hours, CareFirst CHPMD members can leave a voice message. Your call will be returned the next business day. If you would like to speak with the UM Department, please contact Member Services.

Prenatal/Postpartum Care

Prenatal care

Having a healthy pregnancy involves regular checkups with your prenatal doctor. These visits help spot any problems that may impact your delivery. These visits usually occur:

- Once each month weeks 4–28
- Twice a month for weeks 28–36
- Weekly for weeks 36 to birth

Members who are experiencing a high-risk pregnancy may have more frequent appointments.

Most prenatal visits include the following:

- Checking your blood pressure and weight
- Checking the baby's heart rate
- Measuring your abdomen to check your baby's growth

Forming a partnership with your doctor to manage your care during this time will make your delivery much easier.



Postnatal care

After the baby is born, it's important for you to discuss your post-natal visits and your baby's immunization schedule with your doctor.

Typically, post-natal or after-birth visits are scheduled as follows:

- The first visit within the first week of birth
- The second visit 7–14 days after birth
- The third visit 4–6 weeks after birth

The first few weeks after your baby is born can be emotionally and physically demanding. Having support from your family and friends is critical to help keep you from feeling overwhelmed. Use your post-natal visits to discuss any feelings or pain that you're experiencing.

Prenatal classes at CareFirst Engagement Center

Great News! CareFirst CHPMD provides pregnancy benefits to new parents. We have 2 gift cards that you may be eligible to receive as a plan member. The first is for attending a childbirth education class, breast feeding class, or infant care class worth \$125. Once we confirm your completion of the class, we will send the gift card to you. The second gift card is for \$105 and can be used for baby safety items. Please call member services 800-730-8530 to be connected to your case manager or quality specialist to learn more.

HealthChoice benefits

Your benefits through the Maryland HealthChoice program can be found in the CareFirst CHPMD Member Handbook. The Member Handbook can be found on our website in the "For Members" section. If you would like a copy mailed to you, please contact Member Services at 800-730-8530 (TTY: 711). Our Member Services staff are also available to answer any questions you may have about your benefits.

Partner Spotlight: Wider Circle

Wider Circle is a community-driven organization that focuses on promoting social wellness. The group's offerings include group activities, health education, personal support and more—all of which is available to CareFirst CHPMD members at no cost.

To learn more about upcoming events with Wider Circle, visit carefirstchpmd.com/about-us/news-events or please call 833-426-0864 (TTY: 711), Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. (ET). A Wider Circle expert will be happy to answer any questions.



CareFirst Community Health Plan Maryland is working to minimize health care fraud.

Our Special Investigations Unit (SIU) is responsible for minimizing CareFirst CHPMD's risk of health care fraud. The SIU partners with our Member Services, Provider Networks and Claims Departments and our vendors to help identify suspicious claims, stop payments to fraudulent providers and punish wrongdoers.

The SIU also works with state and federal law enforcement, regulatory agencies and other insurance companies to detect and prevent health care fraud.

How to report potential cases of fraud

To report a potential case of fraud, call CareFirst CHPMD's dedicated compliance line at 410-998-5480 or 800-336-4522, 24 hours a day, and 7 days a week. TTY users may call 711.

This hotline allows you to report cases anonymously and confidentially. CareFirst CHPMD will make every effort to maintain your confidentiality. However, if law enforcement needs to get involved, CareFirst CHPMD may not be able to guarantee your confidentiality. Please know that CareFirst CHPMD will not take any action against you for reporting a potential fraud case in good faith.

You can also email us at SIU@carefirst.com or write to us at:

CareFirst Community Health Plan Maryland
Compliance/SIU
P.O. Box 915
Owings Mills, MD 21117



Healthy Eating

Chunky Minestrone Soup

(Serves 4–6)

Directions

Warm the oil in a large pot on the stove over medium high heat. Add in the leek and garlic and sauté for 3–4 minutes, until very fragrant and the leeks are softened.

Add in the broth, marinara, beans, potatoes, carrot, celery, zucchini and bay leaf. Bring the heat to high until it comes to a boil then reduce it down to medium and leave to simmer for around 20 minutes.

Fill another large pot full of water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and add pasta. Cook per the instructions on the pasta package, likely 10–15 minutes. When the pasta is finished, strain and combine it with other ingredients.

Allow pasta to simmer in the broth for 10 minutes, uncovered. Top with parsley, red pepper flakes or parmesan cheese if desired, and serve with crusty bread.

Prep time: 15 mins
Cook time: 20 mins
Total time: 35 minutes



Ingredients

- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 2 cups marinara sauce
- 1/2 package of brown rice shell pasta (around 1-1/2 cups dry pasta)
- 1 can white kidney beans (540 ml/19 oz size can), rinsed thoroughly
- 2 medium yellow potatoes, diced
- 1 carrot, diced
- 1 celery stalk, diced
- 1 small zucchini, diced
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon cold-pressed olive oil
- 1 small leek (or onion), diced
- 1 garlic clove, minced



How to contact us



If you have any questions about the information in this newsletter or other healthcare services, please contact our Member Services Department. We will be happy to help you. We are available Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. If you call us outside of normal business hours, listen to our after-hours message for instructions. You may also leave a voice mail message or email us. All voice mail messages and emails will be returned on the next business day.

- Local: 410-779-9369
- Toll-free: 800-730-8530
- TTY: 711
- Email: CHPMDMembers@carefirst.com
- Website: www.carefirstchpmd.com

Notice of Privacy Practices, Protected Health Information Use & Disclosure

This notice is available at the bottom of our website under Notice of Privacy Practices & HIPAA. If you would like to have the notice mailed to you, please contact Member Services. This notice tells you:

- How CareFirst CHPMD protects your protected health information
- When CareFirst CHPMD is able to disclose protected health information
- Your right to access your protected health information
- Responsibilities CareFirst CHPMD has in protecting your protected health information

Case Management

Members with other complex medical conditions can call Member Services at 410-779-9369 or 800-730-8530 (TTY: 711) or email CHPMDMembers@carefirst.com for information on Case Management services. Members, their caregivers, or their healthcare providers are able to request case management services. These programs are voluntary and are provided at no cost to you. Members identified with certain needs may be automatically enrolled or contacted, but it is always your choice to participate in the program. OB Case Management Services are available through our Baby Steps Program to help you with your pregnancy care needs. Your OB nurse case manager will make sure you are getting the care you need when you need it, including assistance with arranging required special consultations or tests. They will also provide you with pregnancy health information and connect you to community resources. You can get more information in your Member Handbook which can be found on our website in the “For Members” section.

Rights and responsibilities

CareFirst CHPMD provides health coverage to our members on a nondiscriminatory basis, according to state and federal law, regardless of gender, race, age, religion, national origin, physical or mental disability, or any type of illness or condition. To review a full list of CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield Community Health Plan Maryland Member’s Rights and Responsibilities, visit the *For Members* section of our website or call Member Services to request a copy of the *Member Handbook*.

Non-discrimination Notice & Language Accessibility

CareFirst CHPMD complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. CareFirst CHPMD does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

CareFirst CHPMD:

- Provides free aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us, such as:
 - Qualified sign language interpreters
 - Written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, other formats)
- Provides free language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as:
 - Qualified interpreters
 - Information written in other languages.

If you need these services, contact Member Services at **410-779-9369**, or toll-free at **800-730-8530**, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday. TTY users should call 711.



P.O. Box 915
Owings Mills, MD 21117

410-779-9369
www.carefirstchpmd.com

HealthChoice is a Program of the Maryland Department of Health.

CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield Community Health Plan Maryland complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

Spanish: ATENCIÓN: Si usted habla español, tenemos servicios de asistencia lingüística disponibles para usted sin costo alguno. Llame al 800-730-8530 (TTY: 711).

Chinese: 小贴士：如果您说普通话，欢迎使用免费语言协助服务。请拨 800-730-8530 (TTY: 711)。

CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield Community Health Plan Maryland is the business name of CareFirst Community Partners, Inc., an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. BLUE CROSS®, BLUE SHIELD® and the Cross and Shield Symbols are registered service marks of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans.



Join our Consumer Advisory Board!

CareFirst CHPMD has a Consumer Advisory Board (CAB) and we're looking for members to attend our meetings. This group of our very own members and parents/legal guardians of members meet every other month. During the meeting, we get your valuable input on member materials, listen to your experience about your health insurance and share information.

Meetings are held from 12 p.m.–2 p.m., about six times per year. Lunch is served and we can assist with transportation. If you are interested in joining us and want more information, please call us at **800-730-8530** or email CHPMDMembers@carefirst.com. Even if you can't join the CAB meeting, you can make suggestions to help us serve you better. Just call the Member Services Department at **410-779-9369** or **800-730-8530**. TTY users should call 711. You can also send us a letter to CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield Community Health Plan Maryland P.O. Box 915 Owings Mills, MD 21117.