

SUMMER
2024

GROUP UPDATE

for Employers

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**BlueCross BlueShield
of Alabama**

An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

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Understanding, Preventing and Managing Chronic Conditions for Better Health

Chronic conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and cardiac disease, affect millions of people and can significantly impact the health and well-being of your employees. These conditions require ongoing support, management and prevention strategies to improve quality of life.

IMPACT ON EMPLOYEES

ASTHMA can cause wheezing, coughing and difficulty breathing, which may reduce productivity and increase sick days. Environmental triggers like dust, pollen and cold air in the workplace can exacerbate symptoms.

HEART DISEASE can lead to chest pain, fatigue and irregular heartbeat, potentially affecting work performance and attendance. Stressful work conditions can worsen heart disease symptoms.

DIABETES can cause frequent urination, excessive thirst, weight loss and tiredness, impacting concentration and productivity. Employees may need to monitor their blood sugar levels and manage dietary restrictions during work hours.

COPD leads to shortness of breath, constant coughing, wheezing and frequent lung infections, which can reduce work efficiency and increase absenteeism. Exposure to pollutants and respiratory irritants in the workplace can aggravate symptoms.

CONTINUED INSIDE ▶

Keeping Employees Healthy and Productive

Reduced Absenteeism: Proper management of chronic conditions can reduce frequent doctor visits and missed workdays. Promoting awareness and offering resources for early detection help keep employees healthy and present.

Improved Productivity: By helping your employees manage their conditions, they will miss fewer workdays, better focus on their work and perform at their best.

Reduced Healthcare Costs: Early intervention and healthy habits prevent complications and costly hospital stays.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Ensure employees have access to their asthma medications and understand how to use them.
- ▶ Minimize exposure to known triggers by maintaining a clean, allergen-free environment.
- ▶ Encourage employees to create and follow an asthma action plan.

- ▶ Promote a healthy lifestyle through workplace wellness programs focusing on exercise, nutrition and stress management.
- ▶ Provide resources for managing blood pressure and cholesterol, such as health screenings and educational materials.
- ▶ Encourage regular medical check-ups.

- ▶ Support healthy eating options in the workplace and allow flexible breaks for blood sugar monitoring.
- ▶ Offer education on diabetes management and provide access to necessary medical supplies.
- ▶ Encourage participation in physical activities through workplace fitness programs.

- ▶ Implement a smoke-free workplace policy and reduce exposure to pollutants.
- ▶ Provide access to pulmonary rehabilitation programs and encourage the use of prescribed medications.
- ▶ Support employees in quitting smoking by providing resources and counseling.



Managing Chronic Conditions for Better Health (cont.)

EMPOWER YOUR EMPLOYEES WITH RESOURCES AND SUPPORT:

WELLNESS PROGRAMS: Encourage healthy habits by offering programs focused on exercise, nutrition and stress management. These programs can boost overall employee well-being and productivity.

DISEASE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS: Provide targeted resources and support for employees with chronic conditions. This can include educational materials, access to medical advice and personalized management plans.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES: Ensure employees have easy access to health support and resources. This can include on-site health screenings, wellness workshops and information on managing various health conditions effectively.



Blue Cross offers comprehensive resources and support to help prevent and manage chronic conditions. These services aim to lower healthcare costs, improve health outcomes and create a happier, more productive workforce!

*Employees can find out more by calling **1-888-759-2764**, Monday – Friday, 7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Central time. Participation is voluntary, confidential and offered at no additional cost to your employees.*

Help Your Employees Better Understand Their Plan Coverage

Blue Cross has created a brochure to help members get the most out of their benefit plan. Available in September, the brochure covers topics such as:

- ▶ Rights and responsibilities
- ▶ Understanding and using medical benefits, including access to care
- ▶ Benefits of a primary care physician
- ▶ Preventive care services
- ▶ Behavioral health services
- ▶ Understanding pharmacy benefits
- ▶ What is utilization management
- ▶ Protecting healthcare needs
- ▶ How to appeal an adverse decision
- ▶ Programs targeted toward improving health
- ▶ How we are improving quality

*We encourage you to alert your employees that, beginning in September 2024, they can get a copy of the brochure at AlabamaBlue.com/GetTheMost or by calling **1-855-880-6356 (TTY 711)**.*

Did you know?

Employee Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) assists employees who face personal and workplace challenges that negatively affect their well-being and job performance. This product is available as a buy-up to all groups regardless of employee or member count.

At no cost to your employees, EAP can help them and anyone in their household with individual and family counseling, legal services, healthier lifestyle choices, stress management, financial management and more.

Contact your account representative for more details.

New Healthcare Reform Preventive Mandates

PREVENTIVE REQUIREMENT	PUBLISHED DATE	BLUE CROSS EFFECTIVE DATE	CHANGE TO CURRENT BENEFIT?
Routine Immunizations - Mpox Vaccine	New recommendation published October 26, 2023.	October 26, 2023	YES: Addition of new immunizations into existing routine immunization schedule.
Depression, Anxiety, and Suicide Risk Screening	Existing recommendation updated October 11, 2022.	November 1, 2023	YES: Expansion of age range of current preventive service to include age 8 years and older for anxiety screening.
Diabetes Screening During and After Pregnancy	New recommendation published January 1, 2023.	January 1, 2024	YES: New preventive service for type 2 diabetes screening in women with a history of gestational diabetes mellitus.
Multiple Services	Existing recommendation with updated CPT and HCPCS coding.	January 1, 2024	NO: Applicable procedural coding updates (new/revised/deleted codes) to existing benefit services comprehensively reviewed and operationalized.
Contraceptive Methods, Mobile App	Existing recommendation originally published December 2016.	April 1, 2024	YES: Additional contraceptive management product added.

HAVE QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ABOUT GROUP UPDATE?

Please send your feedback to your account management team.