



# INFORMED

## August Informed Newsletter

August 20, 2024

### Grateful for Summer, Grateful for You

The summer months are such a special time of year – beautiful sunshine, warm temperatures, outdoor adventures and more. But we also know how busy this time of year is for you, as you work extra hard during these months to keep our members healthy. You're there for their back-to-school physicals, summer injuries and illnesses, and more. We simply can't thank you enough for all you do. It's because of YOU that our members can enjoy their healthiest, happiest summer possible. Thank you.

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### Help us move the needle.

*Together we can help people live their healthiest lives. Find reminders, tips and more in this section, to guide improvements in patient outcomes. Help us move the needle.*

### Back-to-School Time: Important Information and Reminders

As the school year begins, help keep your young patients healthy and well.

## Yearly Wellness Checkups

As you know, most children require a school physical form to be completed before the school year begins. **HEDIS®\* shows our members (your patients) as noncompliant if they see you for just a school physical – the visit only counts if it's a full annual wellness checkup.** Our ask is to help us get these young patients in for that full, health-evaluating appointment to help us close our gap. Thank you for your partnership in this key initiative.

## Immunizations

Some school districts require their students to have certain vaccinations. When your young patients come see you for their back-to-school wellness checkups, it's a great time to catch them up on missing vaccines.

To help guide the conversation with parents, use the following links from the CDC for the recommended vaccine schedules.

- [Birth through 6 years old.](#)
- [Age 7 through 18 years old.](#)

## Helping Children with ADHD

School can be difficult for your young patients with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Getting used to school after months off, changing schools, having new teachers and classmates, and countless other changes can be hard to face for any child – but even more so for those with ADHD.

As their trusted provider, you can help these children and their families. With the support, guidance and resources you provide, you can help them:

- Create enough structure so the child can adapt to their new routines.
- Keep their child attentive and engaged with learning.
- Connect their child to social opportunities with other children.
- Make sure their child stays physically active and healthy.

The National Resource Center on ADHD (NRC) has created this [toolkit for parents and guardians](#) – please share this with your young patients’ families. It has a wealth of information and resources to help parents and guardians understand ADHD, how to support their child, how to manage their own stress and well-being, and more.

Finally, also share these CDC resources that help parents and guardians make decisions about [schooling](#), [cope with their own stress](#) and [ensure their child's well-being](#).

*\*The [Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set \(HEDIS®\)](#) is a set of quality standards that helps us together measure and assess the care and treatments patients receive. HEDIS® is a registered trademark of the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).*

## Closing Gaps in Care

It’s hard to believe, but 2024 is well past the midyear point. As summer turns into fall, **it’s important to make sure that your patients are getting the appropriate preventive services needed** in order to identify any issues and close any gaps in their care. As appropriate, please remind your patients about the following screenings, visits, vaccines and more.

### All Patients:

- Colorectal cancer screening.
- Blood pressure reading.
- Statins therapy for patients with clinical atherosclerosis.
- Seasonal flu vaccine.
- Medication review.
- Annual wellness visit.

### Women:

- Breast cancer screening.
- Cervical cancer screening.
- Osteoporosis screening for women who’ve had a fracture.
- Prenatal and postpartum care for pregnant women.

## Patients with Diabetes:

- A1C test.
- Nephropathy screening.
- Diabetic retinal eye exams.

## Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis:

- Treatment with a disease-modifying antirheumatic drug (DMARD).

Also, please remember that we have [health coaching and care coordination services](#) that can help our members manage their conditions at no extra cost to them. We know you worry about your patients' health between visits, and these services can help improve their health outcomes throughout the entire year. Thank you for your valuable partnership.

### Make sure your patients get their flu shots.

Flu season is fast approaching, so it's time again to remind your patients to get their yearly flu vaccine. Late summer/early fall is the ideal time for most people to get the shot. Your voice is key. According to the CDC, recommendations – and even simple reminders – from their trusted providers are a critical factor in whether many adults get vaccines for themselves and their families.

With this in mind, the CDC is continuing its vital [SHARE campaign](#) – meant to help providers do all they can to encourage their patients to get their yearly flu shot. Here are the basics, quoted from their campaign:

- **S – Share** the reasons why an influenza vaccine is right for the patient given their age, health status, lifestyle, occupation or other risk factors.
- **H – Highlight** positive experiences with influenza vaccines (personal or in your practice), as appropriate, to reinforce the benefits and strengthen confidence in influenza vaccination.
- **A – Address** patient questions and any concerns about influenza vaccines, including side effects, safety and vaccine effectiveness, in plain and understandable language. Acknowledge that while people

who get an influenza vaccine may still get sick, there are studies that show that illness may be less severe.

- **R – Remind** patients that influenza vaccines help protect them and their loved ones from serious influenza illness and complications that can result in hospitalization or even death for some people.
- **E – Explain** the potential costs of getting influenza, including potential serious health effects for the patient, time lost (such as missing work or family obligations), financial costs and potentially spreading influenza to more vulnerable family or friends.

Each patient is different, and you know them best. Consider the best approach that'll let them know just how important the flu vaccine is and why they and their families should get it. With your help, our communities can stay safer – and breathe easier – through this year's flu season. Thanks for your assistance in this vital endeavor.

*It varies according to health plan, but flu shots are covered at no cost to our members in most cases. Your patients can call the number on the back of their health plan member ID card to learn more about costs and where they can go to get their shots.*

More CDC Resources:

- [Healthcare Providers Fight Flu Toolkit.](#)
- [Influenza Vaccination: A Summary for Clinicians.](#)

### International Overdose Awareness Day

August 31 is International Overdose Awareness Day. Every year, this campaign – the world's largest to end drug overdose – focuses on three main actions:

1. Remembering loved ones who died from a drug overdose and acknowledging the grief of family and friends who were left behind.
2. Encouraging those impacted by substance use and overdose to seek support and recovery.
3. Ending overdose by spreading awareness of prevention strategies.

The CDC has specific recommendations on what you, as providers, can do to help support this cause. **The biggest recommendation includes the prescription of naloxone**, a critical and lifesaving part of the response to the opioid overdose epidemic. Visit [this CDC resource page](#) for more specific information on naloxone.

### Use the ASQ tool to screen for suicide.

If you don't know about the ASQ tool, it's an important way to screen for suicide. Created by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), ASQ stands for Ask Suicide-Screening Questions. The tool asks four simple questions that can be answered in 30 seconds or less.

The questions are very straightforward and ask patients about their thoughts relating to themselves and any suicidal ideations they may have thought of within the past week.

Visit [this NIMH link](#) for the ASQ tool and more information about it.

As a quick reminder, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline number changed in 2022, and for easier access, patients just need to dial 988 to be connected with the crisis center.

### Tips for Treating Low-Back Pain

Low-back pain can be agonizing for your patients – but drugs are not always the answer. Here are some tips from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the American College of Physicians (ACP) regarding treatment recommendations.

Based on reviews of the latest scientific evidence and evaluations of the potential benefits and harms of each care option, the ACP has created a clinical practice guideline for the treatment of low-back pain. Among other guidance, it:

- Recommends nondrug treatments as first-line therapy for **chronic** low-back pain.

- Also recommends nondrug approaches for **acute** low-back pain, with or without drug therapy.
- Suggests several **complementary health approaches** as treatment options for both acute and chronic low-back pain.

According to the NIH, here's what you need to know about the effectiveness of these complementary health approaches:

- Low- to moderate-quality evidence exists that certain mind and body practices – including **acupuncture, electromyography biofeedback, low-level laser therapy, mindfulness-based stress reduction, progressive muscle relaxation, spinal manipulation, tai chi and yoga** – may help with **chronic** low-back pain.
- Low-quality evidence exists that **acupuncture, massage therapy and spinal manipulation** may help with **acute** low-back pain.
- Preparations of the herb **cayenne** – used topically – may help with low-back pain.

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## Important Note About Pharmacy Updates

We're no longer including our Pharmacy Updates section in this bimonthly newsletter. **Instead, to better serve you, we're sending the Pharmacy Updates information as its own, separate flash – so it'll arrive in your inbox in a more timely fashion.** Please look for these Pharmacy Updates flashes and, as always, let us know any questions you may have.

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