2027 Blue Cross and Blue Shield Service Benefit Plan
FEP Blue Standard and FEP Blue Basic
Introduction/Plain Language/Advisory

Preventing Medical Mistakes

Medical mistakes continue to be a significant cause of preventable deaths within the United States. While death is the most tragic outcome, medical mistakes cause other problems such as permanent disabilities, extended hospital stays, longer recoveries, and additional treatments. Medical mistakes and their consequences also add significantly to the overall cost of healthcare. Hospitals and healthcare providers are being held accountable for the quality of care and reduction in medical mistakes by their accrediting bodies. You can also improve the quality and safety of your own healthcare and that of your family members by learning more about and understanding your risks. Take these simple steps:

1. Ask questions if you have doubts or concerns.

- Ask questions and make sure you understand the answers.
- Choose a doctor with whom you feel comfortable talking.
- Take a relative or friend with you to help you take notes, ask questions, and understand answers.

2. Keep and bring a list of all the medications you take.

- Bring the actual medication or give your doctor and pharmacist a list of all the medications and dosages that you take, including non-prescription (over-the-counter) medications and nutritional supplements.
- Tell your doctor and pharmacist about any drug, food, and other allergies you have, such as latex.
- Ask about any risks or side effects of the medication and what to avoid while taking it. Be sure to write down what your doctor or pharmacist says.
- Make sure your medication is what the doctor ordered. Ask the pharmacist about your medication if it looks different than you expected.
- Read the label and patient package insert when you get your medication, including all warnings and instructions.
- Know how to use your medication. Especially note the times and conditions when your medication should and should not be taken.

- Contact your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions.
- Understanding both the generic and brand names of your medication(s) is important. This helps ensure you do not receive double dosing from taking both a generic and a brand of the same medication. It also helps you avoid taking a medication to which you are allergic.

3. Get the results of any test or procedure.

- Ask when and how you will get the results of tests or procedures. Will it be in person, by phone, mail, through the Plan or Provider's portal?
- Don't assume the results are fine if you do not get them when expected. Contact your healthcare provider and ask for your results.
- Ask what the results mean for your care.

4. Talk to your doctor about which hospital or clinic is best for your health needs.

- Ask your doctor about which hospital or clinic has the best care and results for your condition if you have more than one hospital or clinic to choose from to get the healthcare you need.
- Be sure you understand the instructions you get about follow-up care when you leave the hospital or clinic.

5. Make sure you understand what will happen if you need surgery.

- Make sure you, your doctor, and your surgeon all agree on exactly what will be done during the operation.
- Ask your doctor, “Who will manage my care when I am in the hospital?”
- Ask your surgeon:
    - “Exactly what will you be doing?”
    - “About how long will it take?”
    - “What will happen after surgery?”
    - “How can I expect to feel during recovery?”
- Tell the surgeon, anesthesiologist, and nurses about any allergies, bad reactions to anesthesia, and any medications or nutritional supplements you are taking.

Patient Safety Links

For more information on patient safety, please visit:

- www.jointcommission.org/speakup.aspx. The Joint Commission's Speak Up™ patient safety program.
- www.jointcommission.org/topics/patient_safety.aspx. The Joint Commission helps healthcare organizations to improve the quality and safety of the care they deliver.
- www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality makes available a wide-ranging list of topics not only to inform consumers about patient safety but to help choose quality healthcare providers and improve the quality of care you receive.
- https://psnet.ahrq.gov/issue/national-patient-safety-foundation. The National Patient Safety Foundation has information on how to ensure safer healthcare for you and your family.
- www.bemedwise.org. The National Council on Patient Information and Education is dedicated to improving communication about the safe, appropriate use of medications.
- www.leapfroggroup.org. The Leapfrog Group is active in promoting safe practices in hospital care.
- www.ahqa.org. The American Health Quality Association represents organizations and healthcare professionals working to improve patient safety.

Preventable Healthcare Acquired Conditions ("Never Events")
When you enter the hospital for treatment of one medical problem, you do not expect to leave with additional injuries, infections, or other serious conditions that occur during the course of your stay. Although some of these complications may not be avoidable, patients do suffer from injuries or illnesses that could have been prevented if doctors or the hospital had taken proper precautions. Errors in medical care that are clearly identifiable, preventable and serious in their consequences for patients can indicate a significant problem in the safety and credibility of a healthcare facility. These conditions and errors are sometimes called "Never Events" or "Serious Reportable Events."

We have a benefit payment policy that encourages hospitals to reduce the likelihood of hospital-acquired conditions such as certain infections, severe bedsores, and fractures, and to reduce medical errors that should never happen. When such an event occurs, neither you nor your FEHB Plan will incur costs to correct the medical error.

You will not be billed for inpatient services when care is related to treatment of specific hospital-acquired conditions if you use Preferred or Member hospitals. This policy helps to protect you from having to pay for the cost of treating these conditions, and it encourages hospitals to improve the quality of care they provide.