Your bathroom scale. Your gym shoes. Your salad spinner. Here’s another item to add to your list of health and wellness tools: your Internet connection.

A variety of online tools are available to you as a member of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Service Benefit Plan. They can help you prevent health problems or manage chronic conditions. Use them to:

1. **Keep medical information close at hand.** With your personal MyBlue® account, you can save important health information in one convenient place. Organize your health claims and access your statements, health records, provider directories and more.

2. **Make healthy changes.** Whether you’re looking to lose weight, quit smoking or find new ways to keep stress at bay, the new, interactive Online Health Coach can help. Use tracking tools to record your health habits and watch as you make progress and reach your goals!

3. **Access healthcare providers on the go.** Aren’t near your computer? Mobile apps can still link you to the Service Benefit Plan’s directory of Preferred providers. Use the National Doctor & Hospital Finder App — available for free in your smartphone’s app store — to locate Preferred providers anywhere in the country.

Get started!

You’re only minutes away from a healthier you. Visit www.fepblue.org/myblue to sign up for your free, secure account. You’ll find tools and resources designed to help you get organized, save money and live healthy.
Vaccination: Is fear stopping you?

Getting a vaccine is a simple, effective measure you can take to protect yourself against potentially serious illnesses. But many people put off making that appointment. Have you been avoiding getting vaccinated? Here are some common fears you might have about vaccines — plus tips and facts to put you at ease.

“I hate needles. I get lightheaded just looking at them.”
If you dread even just the sight of a needle, you’re not alone. Many people feel nervous around needles. It can help to avoid looking during the vaccination, so close your eyes or turn your head. You could also bring a music player with headphones to distract yourself.

Fainting after vaccination is quite rare. Still, it’s a good idea to sit or lie down for 15 minutes after a shot. This will make sure you don’t fall if you faint standing up.

“The shot is going to hurt.”
Actually, inserting a needle only feels like a pinch, and it’s done in seconds. The expectation is often worse than reality. Try breathing deeply and relaxing your muscles. Or ask your healthcare provider about other options, such as the flu vaccine delivered through a nasal spray. (Note: The nasal spray vaccine is not recommended for adults ages 50 and older, pregnant women, children younger than age 2, people with asthma and some other people. Contact your provider.)

“What if the vaccine makes me feel sick?”
Most of the time, vaccines don’t cause any side effects. When they do, the side effects are usually mild and don’t last more than a few days. The most common side effects are soreness and swelling where you received the shot. Severe side effects, such as allergic reactions, are extremely rare. To be safe, alert your provider if you’re allergic to any foods or medications.

“I’ve heard that vaccines aren’t safe.”
Rest assured, vaccines have to go through years of testing before they are approved. And once a vaccine is available to the public, the government constantly monitors it to ensure its safety. In fact, vaccines are one of the safest measures you can take for your health.

Take a shot at health
Talk with your provider to learn which vaccines you need. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends almost everyone ages 6 months and older get a yearly flu shot. Get it now to protect yourself, before flu season is in full swing. Learn more about vaccines at www.cdc.gov/vaccines.
Ask the doctor:
All about asthma medication

Are you one of the 25 million Americans affected by asthma? Learning to control your asthma can help you enjoy activities — and your life — to the fullest.

Asthma is a chronic health condition. That means managing it is an ongoing process. Taking medications properly and other steps can help prevent asthma attacks and control symptoms.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Medical Director William Lawrence, M.D., answers common questions about asthma medication.

Q. How can I help my child control asthma while at school?
A: Many kids with asthma will need to take rescue medicine for asthma during the day. It is important to make sure that your child has a written asthma action plan, which is shared with and understood by school personnel and your child. This will help trigger the right actions if asthma gets worse at school. It may be appropriate to get two containers of rescue medications from the pharmacist so that your child has one for school and home.

Q. My asthma has been acting up more than usual. Should I see my doctor?
A: Your doctor likely prescribed you two types of medication — a rescue medication that provides quick relief when symptoms pop up and a long-term control medication that’s taken every day to keep symptoms under control. It’s a good idea to check in with your doctor if you started using quick-relief medicine more than two days a week or if you feel like your asthma medications aren’t helping as much. Also let your doctor know if asthma caused you to miss work or school. Your doctor may want to adjust your treatment plan, so you can start feeling your best again.

Q. Do you have any tips to help me remember to take my medication?
A: Sometimes having just a simple reminder is all you need. Try linking your medicine with a task — take it after your morning routine or right after dinner. Program your cell-phone with a reminder. You could also tell family members about your medication schedule and ask them to help by double-checking that you’ve taken your medications, in case you forget.

Need a healthcare provider?
Go to the National Doctor & Hospital Finder via www.fepblue.org/provider. The Service Benefit Plan’s directory of Preferred providers gives you the control to choose the medical provider of your choice, saving you money on medical costs.
The best place for medical care

Planning ahead is one of the best things you can do to protect your health. Knowing where to go for medical care is key to getting the best treatment possible. Here are some care options:

Primary care doctor
Your primary care doctor can often be your fastest, most efficient resource for care when you need it quickly. Schedule an annual checkup with your healthcare provider. That way, he or she can make sure you are in good overall health.

Convenience care centers
Convenience care centers are generally located in pharmacies or “big-box” retailers. They can offer you quality basic care from a nurse practitioner. You might consider a convenience care center if you need a physical or would like to get your flu shot.

Urgent care centers
An urgent care center costs less and may provide faster service than a hospital emergency room (ER). You’ll receive care from a physician or physician assistant. It is good for medical situations that are urgent but don’t put your life in danger. That might mean a minor cut or burn, an ear infection or a sore throat.

Emergency rooms
Available 24/7, an ER offers care for life-threatening medical emergencies. Chest pain or trouble breathing are two examples of when you should get to the ER right away. Or call 911.

Important advice about a hospital stay

If you’ve been in the hospital, you’re probably excited to go home. But don’t rush out of the hospital too fast. Before you leave, you’ll receive instructions. The doctor or nurse may review medications with you, or you may learn about when to change bandages or what type of exercise is safe. Be sure to ask questions if you don’t understand something. It can help to have a friend or family member with you to help you remember. Find out who you should call if you have questions.

Taking these steps can help you recover well — and in the comfort of your own home.

Have health questions? Save this number.

Call the 24-hour Nurse Line at 1-888-258-3432. Need information about a medical condition? Wondering if you should take your child to the doctor? The Nurse Line has trained and caring professionals ready to help you 24/7. Remember, in a life-threatening emergency, call 911 right away.
Is your diabetes under control?

If you have diabetes, regular visits with your healthcare provider are key to managing your condition successfully. Together, you and your provider can create a treatment plan that keeps your blood glucose under control. Are you up on your key checkups? Make sure your provider:

☑ **Checks your blood pressure at every visit**
  *Why?* To detect high blood pressure — having high blood pressure increases your risk for heart disease, which could lead to heart attack and stroke

☑ **Does a complete foot exam once a year**
  *Why?* To check for foot sores and for problems with your foot circulation and nerves

☑ **Does a kidney function blood and urine test once a year**
  *Why?* To detect kidney disease

☑ **Does a blood lipids test once a year**
  *Why?* To measure cholesterol and triglyceride levels

Also make sure you get an **A1c blood test** (if your condition is stable) at least twice a year. This test tells you how well your blood sugar is controlled. While a blood sugar test measures a moment in time, the A1c gives a big-picture view of your blood sugar control during the last two to three months, so you know if your treatment plan is working.

Don’t forget about your vision, either. Every year, get a **dilated eye exam**. This exam can help detect eye disease. If eye problems go undetected, they could cause difficulty with your vision, possibly even blindness.

**Take control — and gain the rewards!**

Through the Diabetes Management Incentive Program, you can improve your blood sugar control and be rewarded for it. You can earn **up to $75** for qualified medical expenses. For example, get $10 in your account for an A1c test or $20 for enrolling in a diabetic disease management program. To get started, complete the Blue Health Assessment (BHA) at [www.fepblue.org](http://www.fepblue.org). Be sure to indicate that you have diabetes on the BHA to qualify.

Stop diabetes before it starts

Don’t have diabetes? You should still make your health a top priority.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that the rate of type 2 diabetes in the U.S. will double or triple by the year 2050. You can prevent becoming a statistic, however. These healthy habits do double duty, protecting against both heart problems and diabetes:

- **Eat more fiber.** Fiber helps lower cholesterol. It helps keep blood sugar normal, too. So eat plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans.
- **Ditch the car.** Walking is good for your blood pressure, weight and blood sugar. Do your errands on foot. Take a walk break instead of a coffee break. Stroll around the block after dinner. Just 30 minutes of walking a day makes a difference.
- **Trim your belly.** Tummy fat raises the risk for both heart disease and diabetes. If you’re overweight, even losing just 5 to 10 percent of your current weight will bring benefits, says the CDC. (That’s 9 to 18 pounds for someone weighing 180 pounds.)
Why care for new moms matters

Ask any mother and they’ll tell you: The time just after baby arrives is joyful, but intense. With all the focus on caring for the newborn, it’s easy for women to put their own health on the back burner. But proper postpartum care (that is, care for mom after baby is born) helps get your whole family off to a healthy start.

Attend to your body
Your body changes a lot during pregnancy. After birth, even more changes occur. At a postpartum visit, ideally four to six weeks later, your healthcare provider can address any concerns you have. Most problems, such as constipation, swollen legs and feet, or burning when you urinate, are minor. But treatment can help. Your provider can also offer you advice on breast-feeding, exercise and weight loss.

Address serious health concerns
If you had a health issue during pregnancy, such as gestational diabetes or high blood pressure, it’s even more important to see your provider. You may need follow-up care. Your provider can also help with the emotional side of new motherhood. Many moms have the blues that last a few days or weeks. But others develop a more serious condition called postpartum depression — sadness so severe it interferes with daily activities. If this describes you, don’t wait. Call your provider right away.

Prepare for the best care
Make the most of your postpartum visit by taking a few minutes to prepare ahead of time. Write down the questions you have about your own health, and your baby’s. Take notes. Before you leave, make sure you understand your next steps, including whether you need a follow-up appointment.

Spotlight on women’s health

Just a reminder!
Is it time for a mammogram?
October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Ask your provider if you’re due for your mammogram. A mammogram is a covered benefit for Service Benefit Plan members who see a Preferred provider.

If you’re an expecting or a new mom, get tips for a healthy pregnancy and baby care at www.fepblue.org. Click on “Health + Wellness” and then “Prepare for a Healthy Baby.”
Maximize your health with a coach

Have you heard about the Healthy Endeavors™ program? Healthy Endeavors is a health coaching program included in your Service Benefit Plan benefits. Registered nurses are available to help you better understand and improve your health. Health coaching is done over the phone, and the nurses will establish a relationship with you, assess your specific needs and work with you on your health goals. Read on for answers to frequently asked questions about this program.

Why participate in health coaching?
It’s your benefit. It’s done over the telephone. We partner with you by listening and providing positive feedback, helpful hints and encouragement on your path to better health.

Does it affect my insurance?
No. This is included in your insurance benefits.

Who can work with a health coach?
It’s open to Service Benefit Plan members, adults or children on the policy, if your healthcare provider has mentioned you have or diagnosed you with high blood pressure, high cholesterol, blood sugar problems, heart disease, asthma or COPD. It’s also available to smokers who want to quit, as well as adults and children who want to manage their weight.

How do I participate? Call 1-888-392-3506 to reach a health coach or leave a message. You could also fill out and return the survey you receive in the mail, and we will call you.

Get creative with veggies

September is Fruit & Veggies More Matters Month. Today, challenge yourself and your family to eat more produce. If you’re tired of the same old mixed greens salad for lunch, or if your kids refuse to eat broccoli with dinner, try these ideas to mix it up:

- Eat them in the morning. Add veggies to breakfast dishes like omelets or breakfast sandwiches. Or blend bananas, strawberries and other fruit with spinach to make a produce-powered smoothie.
- Snack smart. Serve chopped veggies or baked kale chips with hummus instead of traditional chips with dip.
- Explore the store. Scan the aisles for fruits and veggies you haven’t tried before. Bring those “secret ingredients” home and add them into your meals.

Don’t just take our word for it

Check out this feedback from members who have benefitted from the Healthy Endeavors program:

“When I was first diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, I was overwhelmed and had many questions. My health coach was wonderful. She listened to my concerns and my approach to managing my disease… I now have a clearer understanding of my diagnosis and how my body responds to certain foods and medicines.”

“I enjoyed talking to my health coach and getting information on what would help me. I looked forward to her calls and made a real effort to exercise.”

“My health coach was very helpful. She was concerned about helping me reach my health goals.”

In touch

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Sr. Program Manager

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Healthy Endeavors members will continue to receive this magazine for two years.
Get the most out of Blue

A healthier you begins at www.fepblue.org/myblue. Using MyBlue®, you’ll be empowered to create an action plan with your doctor. You can use the website to set your goals and track your progress. Plus, you’ll have access to rewards and incentives to save you money! Registration is free, quick and easy. Sign up today at www.fepblue.org/myblue or scan the code on the left with your smartphone.

Russian tea

Recipe by Healthy EndeavorsSM1 health coach Debra Richardson, R.N. “We use it in our household at the first sign of the flu or a cold,” says Debra. “Then, of course, chicken soup as well!”

Ingredients
1 ¼ cup sugar
¾ cup instant black or green tea
1 cup Tang or orange mix
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
1 tsp. ground cloves
1 two-quart package of lemonade mix

Directions
Combine all ingredients. Mix thoroughly. Store in an airtight container. Shake well before using. Add three to four teaspoon-fuls with hot water. Drink four to six cups a day, as needed.