

# Women's Health — A Guide for Taking Care of *You!*

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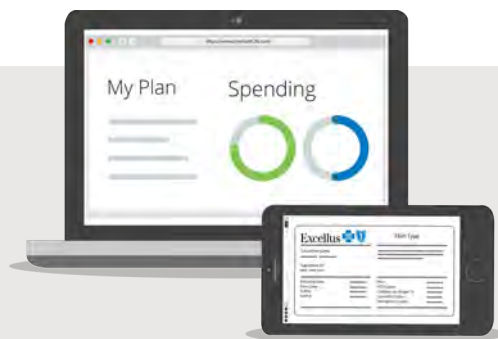
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# Taking Care of your Whole Self

Making time for yourself is important – no matter your age! Self-care is different for everyone, but it means taking care of all of you – physically, mentally, and socially.

## Take our Self-Care Quiz!

	YES	NO
My energy levels are good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am up to date with annual wellness and/or dental visits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I eat well most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get a good night sleep most nights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have time to relax or be alone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My stress levels are low	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel supported by the people around me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



If you answered “no” to one or more of the above statements, **you probably need some self-care.**

## 5 Self-Care Ideas (that are totally free!)

### 1 TAKE A WALK.

Lace up your sneakers and get outside! Drive to a local park and hit the trails with a friend or enjoy time alone.

### 2 DO WHAT YOU ENJOY.

Read a book, paint, put together a puzzle, or sit down and watch your favorite show.

### 3 MEDITATE.

Close your eyes, try to free your mind from any thoughts, and do some deep breathing.

### 4 CREATE A HOME SPA.

Take a warm bath while listening to soothing music.

### 5 TAKE A NAP.

A quick 30-minute snooze is often enough to recharge your batteries!

## Remember, self-care isn't selfish.

Try to take time for yourself at least 2-3 times a week.

Is your stress a sign of something more serious?

Flip to page 9 to learn about **Mood Tracking** and how it can help bring balance to your life!



# Your Well Woman Visit — It's Important To Get the Care You Need

If the idea of going to the gynecologist makes you feel nervous, you are not alone. Or maybe you've skipped visits because you feel healthy, are busy, or simply lost track of how often to go.

## COMMON REASONS WOMEN PUT OFF GOING TO THE GYNECOLOGIST:

- **I CAN'T AFFORD TO GO.**

You have **FREE** preventive care included as part of your health plan when you go to in-network providers.

- **IT'S NOT FUN, I DREAD IT.**

Anticipation can be the worst part. Much of the visit is talk and the exam itself is very short.

- **I'M NOT SEXUALLY ACTIVE.**

These visits aren't just for women who are having sex, they include screenings for different cancers.

- **I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING WRONG.**

Many sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) have no signs or have easy to miss symptoms and can lead to bigger problems if ignored.

- **I DON'T HAVE SEX WITH MEN.**

Regular exams are still an important part of staying healthy.

## VISITING THE GYNECOLOGIST IS IMPORTANT AND CAN BE LIFESAVING. HERE IS A GOOD SCHEDULE TO FOLLOW:

- Your Annual **Women's Health Exam** starting at age 21, sooner if you are sexually active
- **Cervical Cancer Screening** every 3 years starting at age 21 (or as recommended by your provider) to look for abnormalities that could turn into cancer
- **Breast Cancer Screening** every 1-2 years starting at age 50, or as recommended by your doctor. Talk to your doctor about when you should start screening. Call your doctor if you notice changes in how your breasts look or feel.

Your doctor will ask questions about your health and sexual history to see if other screenings may be needed, such as HIV, chlamydia, or other STD testing.

Visit [ExcellusBCBS.com/PreventiveCare](https://www.excellusbcbs.com/PreventiveCare) to find a more complete list of recommended screenings and immunizations for women.



## COMFORT IS KEY

An important part of health care is having a good relationship with your doctor and care team. If you do not have a gynecologist, or if you aren't comfortable with the one you have, talk to your primary care doctor for a referral, ask friends or family who they go to, or visit [ExcellusBCBS.com](https://www.excellusbcbs.com) to Find a **Doctor** who participates with your plan.

Our Care Management Team is always happy to help, too. See page 8 for more details.



# Health Symptoms You *Shouldn't* Ignore

Women are often busy with work, taking care of family, and the home. It can be easy to ignore your own needs. But when it comes to your health, it's important to place yourself first.

1

## VISIT YOUR GYNECOLOGIST OR HEALTH CLINIC AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IF YOU:

- Haven't had an exam in 1 year or more
- Think you may be pregnant
- Find a lump in a breast self-exam
- Have periods that have changed (missed periods or heavy bleeding)
- Have painful periods
- Experience pain or burning with urination
- Bleed between periods or after menopause
- Experience pain during intercourse
- Have vaginal discharge or odor
- Think you have been exposed to a STD

2

## SET UP AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR PRIMARY CARE DOCTOR IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS:

- Shortness of breath when doing normal activities or exercising. Call 911 right away if you have shortness of breath with chest, jaw or back pain, nausea or sweating as these can be signs of a heart attack.
- Weight changes without changing your diet or activity level.
- Unexplained or frequent tiredness can be a symptom of many things, including depression or heart issues.
- A headache that won't go away, lasts more than a few days, or is severe.
- Pain in the chest or a cough that lasts more than a few days should be checked by your doctor. It could be a sign of an infection or pneumonia, or something more serious.

Remember, when your doctor isn't available, you have access to our partner **MDLIVE®** to give you access to non-urgent medical and behavioral health care 24/7 by phone or video.

To learn more or register, visit

**ExcellusBCBS.com/Telemedicine**



# Is My Period Normal?

Menstrual cycles, also known as periods, can be different from woman to woman. What is normal and what is something you should get checked out?

Here's how to tell the difference.

## WHAT'S NORMAL, WHAT'S NOT

Count the length of your period from the first day of one period to the first day of the next. A typical cycle lasts 28 days, but between 24 and 38 days is considered regular for adult women.

If your cycle is shorter or longer, it's considered irregular. Watch for these symptoms:

- Cycles that vary widely from month to month
- Periods that skip days or months
- Skipped periods when you aren't pregnant
- Excessively heavy flow or heavy cramping during your periods
- Bleeding between periods

If you have any of these symptoms, talk with your gynecologist – it could be a sign of a medical problem.



## CAUSES OF IRREGULAR CYCLES

Young teens, women who have recently given birth, and women nearing menopause may have longer periods or irregular cycles. Other health issues can throw your cycles out of whack, including:

- A hormone imbalance
- Benign growths, cysts, or cancers
- Endometriosis
- Eating disorders
- Thyroid problems
- Medications or birth control
- Uncontrolled diabetes

If untreated, it may lead to other health problems and it may be harder to get pregnant, if you're trying to.



## Track Your Cycle

Some smartphones have a health feature that track your period. If yours does not, free apps are available – just search for “**period tracker**.” Many of these apps include options to log PMS symptoms, energy levels, fertile windows, and more!



# Baby on Board?

## Tips for a Healthy Pregnancy

Finding out you are having a baby can be exciting, and a little stressful. While many pregnancies and deliveries go smoothly, some moms and babies have special health needs that require extra care. Having a good doctor – along with your Excellus BCBS team – will help you feel more ready for parenthood.

### 1 NEWLY PREGNANT? CONGRATULATIONS!

One of the first things you should do is call to make an appointment with your obstetrician and/or gynecologist (OB/GYN). If you haven't already, start eating healthy and take a good prenatal vitamin that includes folic acid and iron to help prevent birth defects. Be sure to talk with your doctor before you stop or start any medications – whether it's a prescription, over-the-counter, or herbal supplement.

### 2 CARE DURING (AND AFTER) YOUR PREGNANCY

Taking care of you, and your baby, is important! Many women choose to visit their pregnancy care provider for prenatal care, and to deliver their baby. Others may choose to have a certified nurse-midwife provide care, or a doula for added support. This decision is personal, and every pregnant woman has their own unique needs.

If you are pregnant with a condition like diabetes, high blood pressure or depression, you may need extra support. Some medications may need to be changed to make sure they are working well for you. Since certain serious health conditions like gestational diabetes or pre-eclampsia can happen during pregnancy, regular prenatal visits need to be a priority!

*continued on next page*



To check the maternal care coverage on your health plan, or for help finding a doctor, visit [ExcellusBCBS.com/login](https://www.excellusbcbs.com/login)

**BE SURE TO STAY UP  
TO DATE ON YOUR  
VACCINES DURING  
PREGNANCY  
TO HELP KEEP YOU  
AND BABY SAFE!**

The CDC recommends expectant moms receive the **flu, tDap** (to protect against whooping cough) and **COVID-19** vaccines. Other vaccines may be recommended. Be sure to talk with your doctor.





# Baby on Board? (cont.)

## 3 GETTING READY FOR A NEWBORN

When you're between 24-32 weeks pregnant, you'll want to think about finding a pediatrician for your baby. Ask family or friends who they use or visit our website to find an in-network doctor.

### SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- What are their office hours?
- How do they handle sick visits?
- How close is the office to your home?

Call or visit the office to get answers. This is also a good time to look into childbirth classes and think about if you are going to breast or bottle feed. Your doctor can help provide more information on both of those topics.

### DID YOU KNOW...

Your plan may provide a free or low-cost breast pump! Details are at [ExcellusBCBS.com/login](http://ExcellusBCBS.com/login)



## 4 CARING FOR BABY & MOM

A few days after coming home, your baby will have their first well-child visit with their pediatrician – so be sure to make this appointment soon after you deliver. Their doctor will help answer your questions, discuss vaccinations and screenings, and set up future visits.

While this is a busy time, it's important you don't skip your postpartum visit! Usually about 6-8 weeks after delivery, this is when your provider can see how you are recovering physically and emotionally. While you're there, make sure to get screened for postpartum depression and ask about future family planning and birth control options if you're interested.

**LOG IN TO OUR WEBSITE AT**  
[ExcellusBCBS.com/login](http://ExcellusBCBS.com/login)

to view your benefits and family planning coverage.



Remember, while caring for your baby make sure you make time to take care of yourself!

**Visit page 3 for five free self-care tips!**



## Facts:

**Nearly 25%**

of all U.S. women do not receive the recommended number of prenatal visits

**30-40% or more**

of Black/African American, Hispanic, American Indian or Alaska Native women do not get the prenatal care they need.

*(Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Library of Medicine)*

# A Healthy Start for Every Mom & Baby

Pregnant women in the United States are more than twice as likely to die from problems related to pregnancy or childbirth than those in most other high-income countries due to heart and blood conditions, stroke, pre-eclampsia, infections, and mental health-related issues.

Women most at risk include those who aren't receiving prenatal care, and those who are Black/African American, Hispanic, American Indian, or Alaska Native.

Excellus BCBS believes your race, ethnicity, income, or where you live shouldn't impact your ability to have a healthy pregnancy and baby. We know access to quality medical care and reliable transportation will help make sure you get the care you need.

### SUPPORT FOR EXPECTANT AND NEW MOTHERS (AT NO EXTRA COST!)

We encourage all new or expectant mothers to enroll in our **Bright Beginnings** program (formerly known as Healthy Baby Connection), which provides personal support before, during, and after pregnancy. You'll be connected with an Excellus BCBS registered nurse care manager who will help you manage your care, assist with transportation or food needs, and more.

### CONNECT WITH A CARE MANAGER

**Call 1-877-222-1240 (TTY 711)**

Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

### AFTER HOURS? REQUEST A CALL VIA EMAIL.

One of our specialists will follow up with you within 24-48 hours. [Case.Management@ExcellusBCBS.com](mailto:Case.Management@ExcellusBCBS.com)





# Baby Blues:

## Warning Signs of Postpartum Depression

With all the hormone changes and stress involved with giving birth, it's no surprise that **up to 80% of all new moms feel sad, anxious, or overwhelmed, after giving birth.** If these feelings last longer than two weeks, you may have what's called postpartum depression. About 1 in 9 new mothers experience this, and symptoms include:

- Crying more than usual
- Losing interest in activities
- Feeling moody, restless, or angry
- Having a lack of interest in the baby
- Doubting your ability to care for the baby
- Trouble concentrating or making decisions
- Thinking about hurting yourself or the baby

Depression can develop during pregnancy or up to a year after childbirth. The good news is **you are not alone – help is available!** Talk to your doctor for help choosing the support that is right for you.



## 24/7 NURSE LINE

Don't forget, with Excellus BCBS, you have access to a nurse anytime at no additional cost –

**Call 1-800-348-9786 (TDD/TTY 711)**

\* The Nurse Line is not for emergencies; if you have severe symptoms dial 911, contact a physician, or urgent care center



## Mental Health Matters:

### Track Your Mood

**Mood tracking can help you see trends and triggers in your emotional well-being.** Jot down your mood, what impacted your mood, how you slept, and any self-care each day. If you see a pattern of sadness or negative feelings, contact your doctor so they can create a plan to help you feel better!

### Manage Stress

**Manage stress through better sleep, mindfulness, and meditation with the Calm App.** A 12-month premium subscription is included with your health plan for you and covered family members.



**LOG IN NOW TO ACTIVATE  
YOUR SUBSCRIPTION**

**[ExcellusBCBS.com/login](https://ExcellusBCBS.com/login)**

## Notice of Nondiscrimination

Our Health Plan complies with federal civil rights laws. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. The Health Plan does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or gender.

The Health Plan:

- 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, please refer to the enclosed document for ways to reach us.

If you believe that the Health Plan has failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex, you can file a grievance with:

Advocacy Department  
Attn: Civil Rights Coordinator  
PO Box 4717  
Syracuse, NY 13221  
Telephone number: 1-800-614-6575  
TTY number: 1-800-421-1220  
Fax: 1-315-671-6656

You can file a grievance in person or by mail or fax. If you need help filing a grievance, the Health Plan's Civil Rights Coordinator is available to help you.

You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, electronically through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, available at <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>, or by mail or phone at:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Room 509F, HHH Building  
Washington, D.C. 20201  
1-800-368-1019, 1-800-537-7697 (TDD)  
Complaint forms are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>.



Attention: If you speak English free language help is available to you. Please refer to the enclosed document for ways to reach us.

Atención: Si habla español, contamos con ayuda gratuita de idiomas disponible para usted. Consulte el documento adjunto para ver las formas en que puede comunicarse con nosotros.

注意: 如果您说中文, 我们可为您提供免费的语言协助。  
请参见随附的文件以获取我们的联系方式。

Внимание! Если ваш родной язык русский, вам могут быть предоставлены бесплатные переводческие услуги. В приложенном документе содержится информация о том, как ими воспользоваться.

Atansyon: Si ou pale Kreyòl Ayisyen gen èd gratis nan lang ki disponib pou ou. Tanpri gade dokiman ki nan anvlòp la pou jwenn fason pou kontakte nou.

주목해 주세요: 한국어를 사용하시는 경우, 무료 언어 지원을 받으실 수 있습니다. 연락 방법은 동봉된 문서를 참조하시기 바랍니다.

Attenzione: Se la vostra lingua parlata è l'italiano, potete usufruire di assistenza linguistica gratuita. Per sapere come ottenerla, consultate il documento allegato.

אויפמערקזאם: אויב איר רעדט אידיש, איז אומזיסטע שפראך הילף אוועילעבל פאר אייך ביטע רעפערירט צום בייגעלייגטן דאקומענט צו זען אפנים זיך צו פארבינדן מיט אונז.

নজর দিন: যদি আপনি বাংলা ভাষায় কথা বলেন তাহলে আপনার জন্য সহায়তা উপলভ্য রয়েছে। আমাদের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করার জন্য অনুগ্রহ করে সংযুক্ত নথি পড়ুন।

Uwaga: jeśli mówisz po polsku, możesz skorzystać z bezpłatnej pomocy językowej. Patrz załączony dokument w celu uzyskania informacji na temat sposobów kontaktu z nami.

تنبيه: إذا كنت تتحدث اللغة العربية، فإن المساعدة اللغوية المجانية متاحة لك. يرجى الرجوع إلى الوثيقة المرفقة لمعرفة كيفية الوصول إلينا.

Remarque : si vous parlez français, une assistance linguistique gratuite vous est proposée. Consultez le document ci-joint pour savoir comment nous joindre.

نوٹ: اگر آپ اردو بولتے ہیں تو آپ کے لیے زبان کی مفت مدد دستیاب ہے۔ ہم سے رابطہ کرنے کے طریقوں کے لیے منسلک دستاویز ملاحظہ کریں۔

Paunawa: Kung nagsasalita ka ng Tagalog, may maaari kang kuning libreng tulong sa wika. Mangyaring sumangguni sa nakalakip na dokumento para sa mga paraan ng pakikipag-ugnayan sa amin.

Προσοχή: Αν μιλάτε Ελληνικά μπορούμε να σας προσφέρουμε βοήθεια στη γλώσσα σας δωρεάν. Δείτε το έγγραφο που εσωκλείεται για πληροφορίες σχετικά με τους διαθέσιμους τρόπους επικοινωνίας μαζί μας.

Kujdes: Nëse flisni shqip, ju ofrohet ndihmë gjuhësore falas. Drejtojuni dokumentit bashkëlidhur për mënyra se si të na kontaktoni.



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## Important Plan Information

# Your Member Benefits — Help If You Need It

Excellus BCBS is committed to our members and the communities we serve. We are working to improve access to health care for all while making investments in the community to improve health education, access to food, housing, transportation, caregiver programs and more.

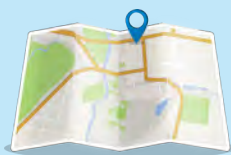


### Contact an Excellus BCBS Care Manager

Our team of experienced nurses and specialists are here to listen, understand, and connect you to resources and support.

**Call 1-877-222-1240 (TTY 711)**

Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.



### Need Transportation?

To learn about transportation to or from non-emergency medical appointments:

Visit

**NYconnects.ny.gov**



**STAY SAFE. STAY HEALTHY.**  
**Get a COVID-19 Vaccine at No Cost.\***

### FIND VACCINES NEAR YOU:

**Visit**

**Vaccines.gov**

**Call the COVID-19 Vaccine Hotline**

**1-800-232-0233 (TTY 1-888-720-7489)**

**Text your zip code to**

**GETVAX (438829) for English**

**VACUNA (822862) for Spanish**

*\*Available for people ages 5 or older; booster shot eligibility may vary. COVID-19 vaccine must be FDA authorized or approved.*

## Have A Question About Your Health Insurance? We're here to help.



- Log in to your member account
- Talk to a Customer Care Advocate

Visit **ExcellusBCBS.com/Contact**  
or call the number on the back of your member card.

MDLIVE® and CALM® are independent companies that provide services to Excellus BlueCross BlueShield members.

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