Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield

Flu Prevention and Treatment Saves Lives

Flu season is upon us, and patients with certain chronic conditions, including asthma, diabetes and chronic heart disease, are at increased risk for illnesses and hospitalizations caused by seasonal flu. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications annually, and between 3,000 and 49,000 die each year from flu-related causes.

An ounce of prevention

While the CDC recommends everyone six months of age and older receives the vaccine, flu shots are especially important for your high-risk patients. Encourage them to be vaccinated as soon as possible — a flu shot is still the best prevention method. Those at highest risk include:

- Children younger than 5, but especially younger than 2 years old
  - Children between the ages of 6 months and 8 years of age who are receiving a flu vaccine for the first time will need to have two doses with at least 4 weeks between doses
- Adults 65 and older
- Women who are pregnant or expect to become pregnant
- Patients with certain chronic diseases
- American Indians and Alaska Natives

Encourage your patients to get a flu vaccine. Please educate your patients about the risks of the flu and provide flu vaccines as appropriate. Remember adult members with Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield pharmacy benefits can get a free flu shot. They just need to show their member IDs at participating pharmacies during flu shot clinic hours. Coverage for children’s vaccines varies, so contact your local Provider Relations representative to learn more.

Antiviral drugs

If patients do get sick, antiviral drugs not only lessen flu duration and symptoms but decrease the risk for flu-related complications. Antiviral drugs, as well as many cough and cold products, are on our formulary posted at www.anthem.com/medicareprovider. Restrictions apply.

Stay informed

Find the latest flu updates, health care recommendations and printable patient education materials at www.cdc.gov/flu. Remember to protect yourself and your patients by getting your vaccine, too.

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1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report August 15 2014

Prevention and Control of Seasonal Influenza with Vaccines: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) — United States, 2014–15 Influenza Season
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