

New Website Brings Louisiana 2 Step to Kids

With the launch of www.2Step4Kids.com, Blue Cross has expanded the award-winning **Louisiana 2 Step** health message to include elementary- and middle school-aged children.

The site is a kid-friendly version of www.Louisiana2Step.com, the innovative healthy eating and exercise website that has encouraged thousands across the state to “Do the 2” by making small but significant daily lifestyle changes.

“Louisiana’s children are among the heaviest in the nation,” said John Maginnis, vice president of Corporate Communications at Blue Cross. “This launch addresses that unfortunate statistic and is our way of responding to parents and teachers who’ve asked for a way to involve kids in the 2 Step.”

If you’ve got kids, grandkids, godchildren or other little loved ones age 5 through 12, help them log on to www.2Step4Kids.com. The site teaches the simple “Eat Right, Move More” message in a fun way. Kids can play interactive games with nutrition and exercise themes, earn reward points, build their own “Me 2” characters and keep track of their exercise and eating habits with simple food and activity logs. The site also includes resources and an idea exchange for teachers and parents.

Someone’s Doing the 2 Near You!

Blue Cross’ 2 Step program reaches every parish and 36 other states

The **Louisiana 2 Step** program now has registered members in all of Louisiana’s 64 parishes.

Registration is free and is not required for Louisiana residents to visit the whimsical website at www.Louisiana2Step.com to get basic information on the two daily steps to better health: *eat right* and *move more*.

But registered members have access to more of the website’s fun interactive features, such as weight, calorie and activity trackers and virtual coaches to cheer them on.

Website visitors can also find out which cities in each parish have registered members by clicking on the button that says “Look Who’s Doing the 2: View Member Map.”

Overall, the Louisiana 2 Step – launched in January 2007 – has more than 10,800 registered members. It has fans in 36 states other than Louisiana, and its new kid-friendly companion program, **2 Step 4 Kids**, already has several hundred members and counting.

In other 2 Step news, registered members can now order a copy of *River Road Recipes III: A Healthy Collection* for only \$12. Just visit the 2 Step website and click on Bonus Programs.

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The Importance of Screening for Prostate Cancer

Early detection is important in the treatment of prostate cancer. The disease has four stages, and treatment varies depending on when the disease is discovered. Louisiana ranked sixth nationally for prostate cancer death rates in 2006, and an estimated 36.4 men per 100,000 will die from prostate cancer in Louisiana this year.

All men age 40 and older should be screened annually for prostate cancer. Men with a family history of the disease should begin annual screenings at age 35.

According to the National Cancer Institute, there are four primary methods of screening for prostate cancer. These methods include two types of rectal exams, a biopsy and a less-invasive prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test. Prostate cancer has a 99 percent survival rate if caught early – and *all* Blue Cross policies include first-dollar benefits for an annual prostate cancer screening for men in the recommended age groups. So take advantage of your benefits and talk to your doctor today about whether you should get screened!

Black men have a prostate cancer mortality rate of about 2.5 times greater than white men because they tend to get screened less often. Blue Cross is focused on reducing this disparity in healthcare along with similar disparities in rates of colon cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and childhood obesity.

Learn more about prostate cancer screening, diagnosis and treatment at the National Cancer Institute’s website, www.cancer.gov.

Or visit **Healthcare Advisor**SM, Blue Cross’ comprehensive online guide to medical conditions, common treatments, drug information and more. Just visit www.bcbsla.com.

Sources: National Cancer Institute, National Prostate Cancer Coalition

Prostate Cancer: Fast Facts

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*Healthcare Advisor is powered by WebMD Health Services, an independent company that provides healthcare information to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana customers.

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Osteoporosis: Prevention and Treatment Tips to Protect Your Bones

Osteoporosis, or porous bone, is a disease marked by low bone mass and the structural deterioration of bone tissue. It can lead to weak, fragile bones and put *both men and women* at a higher risk for fractures of the hip, spine and wrist.

Although women are more likely to develop osteoporosis because they have smaller, thinner bones and lose bone tissue rapidly after menopause, men are also at risk for developing the disease as they age.

Preventing osteoporosis

Although there is no cure for the disease, you can help prevent osteoporosis by following a simple program:

- Eat a balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D.
- Do weight-bearing exercise regularly.
- Lead a healthy lifestyle with no smoking or excessive alcohol consumption.
- Talk to your doctor about bone density testing and medication (when appropriate).

Where to get it

Your doctor can tell you how much calcium and vitamin D you should get for your age and gender. Good sources of **calcium** include low-fat dairy products, dark green, leafy vegetables, sardines and salmon with bones, tofu, almonds and fortified foods such as orange juice and cereal.

Vitamin D is important in calcium absorption and is made in the skin through exposure to sunlight. Most people get enough

vitamin D naturally, but supplements are available for those who need it.

Symptoms of osteoporosis

Most people do not even know they have osteoporosis until their bones become so weak that a sudden strain, bump or fall causes a hip to fracture or a vertebra to collapse. If you feel that you might have osteoporosis, see your doctor for a complete checkup.

Treating (and preventing) osteoporosis

Several medications are approved by the FDA for preventing and/or treating osteoporosis. They include alendronate (Fosamax®), Actonel®, Boniva®, Evista®, Miacalcin®, Fortica® and Forteo™. Talk with your doctor to see if any of these may be an option for you.

If you are currently taking a brand-name medication for osteoporosis, you may want to consider a generic alternative. Clinical trials have shown that alendronate, a generic alternative, works effectively for most people and can provide results similar to brand-name Fosamax at a lower cost.

For more information

Visit **Healthcare Advisor**, your complete online medical encyclopedia, for detailed information about osteoporosis: what it is, how it's diagnosed and treated ... even suggested questions to print out and bring to a doctor visit. Just log on to AccessBlue at www.bcbsla.com and click on Healthcare Advisor to open an online treasure chest of knowledge.

Source: The National Institutes of Health (NIH); the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

A Better Way to Get Answers

Blue Cross is pleased to offer our customers a *truly* new and improved way to get quick answers to benefits and claims questions.

Just go online at www.bcbsla.com any time, day or night, and click on Customer. Using our new **online customer inquiry form**, you can submit your questions to Customer Service securely and conveniently.

- **Claims.** Choose this category to submit questions about your claim(s) for past healthcare services. You can ask about up to 10 claims per form.
- **Benefits.** Choose this category to ask a question about benefits for *future* care. (Note: If you need authorization for a medical procedure scheduled in the very near future, please call the Medical Authorization number on your ID card. If you have a medical emergency, call 911.)
- **Other.** Choose this category to ask us anything else about your coverage.

Remember that you may be able to find the answers to many

questions about your health or health insurance on our website at www.bcbsla.com. The useful self-service tools available for researching medical conditions or managing your account allow you to:

- Find a network doctor in your area
- Check the status of a claim through AccessBlue
- Get a list of covered drugs
- Compare Louisiana hospitals
- Order a new ID card
- Download frequently used forms
- And more!

Of course, customers who prefer to contact us by phone or in person still have that option. It's our goal to provide all of our members with an *exceptional* experience. You can find all the ways to get in touch with Blue Cross on the Contact Us page at www.bcbsla.com.

Be Proactive! Talking to Your Doctor About Prescriptions

Have you ever felt intimidated when talking to your physician — afraid of asking inappropriate or silly questions? When it comes to concerns you have about prescription drugs, it's important to get all your questions answered. Here are some tips on how to start that conversation with your doctor:

- **Inform healthcare personnel about your allergies.** Your doctor needs this information to help choose the appropriate therapy for you. Be sure to know the name of the medication you are allergic to and what type of reaction you had when you took it.
- **Tell your physician about all other medications you are taking, including over-the-counter (OTC), herbal or supplemental products.** This helps prevent possible harmful interactions.
- **Ask the name of the medication being prescribed and how it works.** Understand why the doctor is prescribing it for you, how many days you need to take the medication and how many times per day. Also ask what to do if you forget to take a dose.
- **Ask if a generic is available.** Generics offer the chance for you to save some money at the pharmacy checkout counter. Generic medicines are cheaper than brand-name medications, but they've been approved by the FDA to be safe and effective. Your doctor may give you a generic *alternative*, a medication that belongs to the same drug class as the brand-name medicine, or a generic *equivalent*, which has the same ingredient(s) as the brand.
- **Ask about common side effects and related symptoms.** Learn what to expect when taking the medication and when you should call your doctor.

When your doctor prescribes a new medicine for you, you'll also want to become familiar with the components of a written prescription and the prescription label.

- Before you leave the doctor's office**, notice whether the physician has indicated either "**Dispense as Written (DAW)**" or "**Brand Medically Necessary**" at the bottom of the prescription form. A generic cannot be substituted without the doctor's approval if either of these options is indicated.
- Read the prescription label** on the medication bottle before you take the first dose to be sure the drug name, strength, quantity, number of refills and directions match with the prescription and what the doctor told you.
- Look at your medications** before leaving the pharmacy to be sure you received the right quantity and type of medication and that it looks like what you expected.

Next time you meet with your doctor, keep these tips in mind. Don't ever be afraid to ask questions and learn more about your condition and the drugs used to treat it. You can make informed decisions about your health.

Plan Ahead for the Next Big Storm

As much of our state recovers from recent storms, Blue Cross is reminding our customers to gather and safeguard your personal health records and other vital information, now — before the next big storm.

What exactly does this mean? No one will ever forget the chaotic days right after hurricanes Katrina and Rita, when many evacuees from New Orleans or Southwest Louisiana found themselves far from home. Gustav and Ike brought a repeat of some of those scenes. Those with health issues often had no way to give new doctors complete, accurate information about their medical histories and the prescriptions they were taking. Blue Cross moved quickly after Katrina to offer members in the hardest-hit areas a way to get access to a three-year claims history, called the Blue Health Record, by internet or phone.

As Gustav and Ike have proven, any large hurricane can cause evacuations, and there are other reasons you might need access to your health records while you're away from home.

That's why Blue Cross members can now create a **personal health record (PHR)** by going online at our website, www.bcbsla.com. Through AccessBlue, our secure, password-protected self-service area, you can review your current claims records with Blue Cross. You can add your own healthcare information such as scanned ID cards, prescription medication records, names and numbers of physicians, family members' names and birthdates, immunization records and emergency contacts to create a complete PHR, which is stored safely and accessible online 24 hours a day from any internet-connected computer.

In addition, any Louisianian is invited to pick up a **free brochure of hurricane preparedness** tips at any of Blue Cross' eight district offices statewide.

More about Personal Health Records

Several companies offer PHRs, but Blue Cross' PHR is unique because it is *portable*. We believe that your information belongs to you — so your PHR service stays with you at no charge even if you choose another insurance carrier down the road.

With your permission, doctors or hospital personnel can access your PHR to get a broader picture of your health status. To create a free PHR, just visit www.bcbsla.com and sign up for AccessBlue, the secure member self-service area. Members without internet access can contact our Customer Service Center at 1.800.495.BLUE (2583) to obtain your Blue Cross healthcare records.

Other ways to be prepared

In addition to creating a PHR, Blue Cross encourages our customers to prepare for hurricane season by keeping several days' worth of prescription medications on hand in case a pharmacy is not within reach. If you have covered family members age 18 and older, download and fill out an Authorized Delegate Form and return it to Blue Cross so that you can talk to Customer Service about these family members in case of emergency.

To access the Authorized Delegate Form or get up-to-date information after a major storm, visit www.bcbsla.com or contact Customer Service at 1.800.495.BLUE (2583).