Live Well, Work Well

Employee Health Benefits Bulletin February 2021
Mansfield Township School District

The COVID-19 Vaccine

Timely Tip: At the start of each new year, you can access certain in-network preventive care services (e.g., lab work, routine physicals, and screenings) at no charge.

Reminder: any deductibles that apply to your plans renewed on January 1.

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The pandemic continues—stay current with this vaccine update:

Two vaccines have been granted emergency use authorization by the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) at the time of this writing. The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines differ in some ways (namely, how they must be shipped), but they are generally the same. Both are now being distributed throughout the United States.

Here in New Jersey, those in the education sector are considered *frontline essential workers* and are designated as "Phase 1B" vaccine recipients. One way to get your vaccine is to pre-register for the vaccine at covidvaccine.nj.gov; you should be notified when your vaccine is available. As with most recommended vaccines, the COVID-19 vaccine is typically covered by your Aetna / AmeriHealth plan.

Both vaccines work by "tricking" the immune system into creating antibodies that fight COVID-19, the same method used in most modern vaccines, including the flu vaccine given to millions each year. There is a chance of mild side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine; these include swelling, pain, or redness near the vaccine site; fatigue; chills; headache; joint pain; and fever. This means the vaccine is working—contact your doctor if symptoms persist. The vaccine is administered in two doses to ensure the most protection. Even after receiving both doses, you must continue to follow COVID-19 safety guidelines. Find more COVID-19 resources at *Benefits Online* via the *Staff Portal*.

Chapter 44 Contribution Clarification

For employees earning a base salary above $125,000, the NJEHP contribution amount is calculated using a salary of $125,000.

New COVID-19 Strain

The CDC reports a new variant of COVID-19 has been reported in the United States. Referred to as B.1.1.7, this strain of the coronavirus was identified in the United Kingdom before it was detected in the United States.

Thus far, knowledge of this new COVID-19 strain is minimal, though health experts believe it to be up to 50% more contagious than the more common strain. However, according to the CDC, there is not yet evidence that this variant causes more severe illness or increased risk of death than the standard strain.

Health experts believe the COVID-19 vaccine should have similar efficacy on B.1.1.7 as the common COVID-19 strain, though there is limited knowledge on the topic as yet.

In response to B.1.1.7 and other COVID-19 strains, the CDC has launched "National SARS-CoV-2 Strain Surveillance (NS3)," a program to increase the number and types of viruses undergoing characterization. Data from these efforts will continue to be analyzed at the CDC, which will communicate new information as it becomes available.

As additional states report cases of the new variant, it is important to continue protecting yourself and loved ones. For more information on the new strain, visit cdc.gov.

National Health Observances

February

American Heart Month
American Heart Association
heart.org

National Children's Dental Health Month
American Dental Association
ada.org

March

National Nutrition Month
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
eatright.org

National Kidney Month
National Kidney Foundation
kidney.org

Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month
Colorectal Cancer Alliance
ccalliance.org

Healthy Recipe

Baked Lemon Chicken

Ingredients

- 3-1/2 pounds chicken
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper
- 1-1/2 garlic cloves thinly sliced (or 1 tsp. garlic powder)
- 4 thyme sprigs (or 1 tsp. dried thyme)
- 3 cups onion (thinly sliced)
- 1-1/2 cups chicken stock
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 lemon (cut into 10 slices)

Preparations

1) Skin chicken and cut into 10 pieces; lay chicken pieces in a 11x13-inch baking pan.
2) Sprinkle salt, pepper, garlic, and thyme over the chicken.
3) Combine onions, chicken stock, and lemon juice in a sauce pan. Heat mixture to a boil.
4) Pour hot lemon mixture around the chicken.
5) Top chicken with lemon slices.
6) Bake 30 minutes at 400°F; serve.