

# America's 1st Choice

Member Newsletter

# The Choice Connection

May 2011

**Visit our website for updated information at your fingertips!**

[www.americas1stchoice.com](http://www.americas1stchoice.com).  
Or contact Member Services at 1-866-321-3947.

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# 2011 Hurricane Preparedness

The **2011 Atlantic hurricane season** will officially start on June 1 and end on November 30. These dates outline the period of each year when most tropical cyclones form in the Atlantic.

strength and 1 to 3 become major hurricanes.

On December 8, 2010, Klotzbach's team issued its first forecast for the 2011 season,



However, should a tropical or subtropical cyclone form outside of these dates, it would count as part of the 2011 season.

Hurricane experts Philip J. Klotzbach, William M. Gray, forecast hurricane activity each year. A normal season, as defined by NOAA, has 9 to 12 named storms, of which 5 to 7 reach hurricane

predicting well above-average activity with 17 named storms, nine hurricanes, and five major hurricanes. Lastly, the team noted a higher chance for storms to make landfall in the United States than in 2010. Tropical cyclone activity this year could be about 40% above the 1950–2010 average, with 15.6 tropical storms, 8.4 hurricanes, and 4.0 major hurricanes anticipated.

## Storm Surge

Storm surge is simply water that is pushed toward the shore by the force of the winds swirling around the storm. This advancing surge combines with the normal tides to create the hurricane storm tide, which can increase the mean water level 15 feet or more. In addition, wind driven waves are superimposed on the storm tide. This rise in water level can cause severe flooding in coastal areas, particularly when the storm tide coincides with the normal high tides. Because much of the United States' densely populated Atlantic and Gulf Coast coastlines lie less than 10 feet above mean sea level, the danger from storm tides is tremendous. The level of surge in a particular area is also determined by the slope of the continental shelf. A shallow slope off the coast will allow a greater surge to inundate coastal communities. Communities with a steeper continental shelf will not see as much surge inundation, although large breaking waves can still present major problems. Storm tides, waves, and currents in confined harbors severely damage ships, marinas, and pleasure boats.

**Source:** *National Hurricane Center – [www.nhc.noaa.gov](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov)*

## “We Have You Covered During Disaster HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS Preparations”

In the event a mandatory hurricane evacuation is announced with intended landfall within 72 hours, we know you need necessary prescription refills and will implement pharmacy protocols to make it easier for you to get them. Procedure updates will be immediately added to our 24/7 phone messages and website. If a disaster impacts one of our service areas, prior authorization guidelines will

be temporarily suspended to allow you to receive the care you need. This information will also be immediately posted on our phone system and website. We are prepared to meet your needs in any situation! **Now, it is time to check your emergency preparations.**

- If you do not have a disaster preparation guide, you may visit our website or one

of our local Concierge offices to pick one up. Venues such as your local grocery or home improvement stores often carry Hurricane Preparation Guides.

- If you have special needs, live in an evacuation zone and may intend to use shelter in an emergency, please remember to register with your county emergency management office in advance.

# Adult Check-Ups

Regular checkups can help maintain good health. Taking care of your health now may help prevent future problems. If you do have a health problem, it is better to find out early so doctors can start treatment (if necessary). The type of exams and tests you need will depend on several factors - age, health history, family history, and lifestyle choices. Your doctor can give you advice for a healthy lifestyle, including diet, exercise, vitamins and supplements, tobacco, alcohol use and accident prevention.

## Tests for men & women at their annual check-up

**Women** should have their weight, body mass index, blood pressure and cholesterol levels monitored regularly. After age 40, women should have a mammogram to screen for breast cancer. After age of 50, women should be tested for colorectal cancer. These are routine tests. Your doctor will also make sure you have all the shots you need, like flu and pneumonia. Health tips: Talk to your doctor about exercise, diet, and vitamins, like calcium to help prevent bone problems.

**Men** should have their weight, body mass index, blood pressure and cholesterol levels monitored regularly. After age 50, men should be tested for colorectal cancer. This is a routine test. Your doctor will also make sure you have all the shots you need, like flu and pneumonia. Health tips: Talk to your doctor about diet, exercise, and testing for prostate cancer.

Your health plan re-commends that you have a complete adult check-up every year, or more frequent if your doctor advises.

During your check up, your doctor may:

- Check your blood pressure
- Weigh you and check your body mass index
- Ask questions about your health history, including what medicines you take
- Perform a complete physical examination
- Order lab tests, like cholesterol or blood sugar
- Let you know what other tests you may need

Be aware of any changes in your health. Tell your doctor about any changes in how you feel. This will help your doctor to diagnose and treat health problems at an early stage. When you see your doctor, ask what tests you may need, like lab tests, vision tests or cancer screenings. Tell your doctor about all of the medicines you are taking, even those over-the-counter. It's a good idea to take a pen and paper with you to your doctor visits, so you can take notes to help remember what your doctor said. It's okay to ask questions! Your doctor wants you to understand what treatment or medicine s(he) is advising.

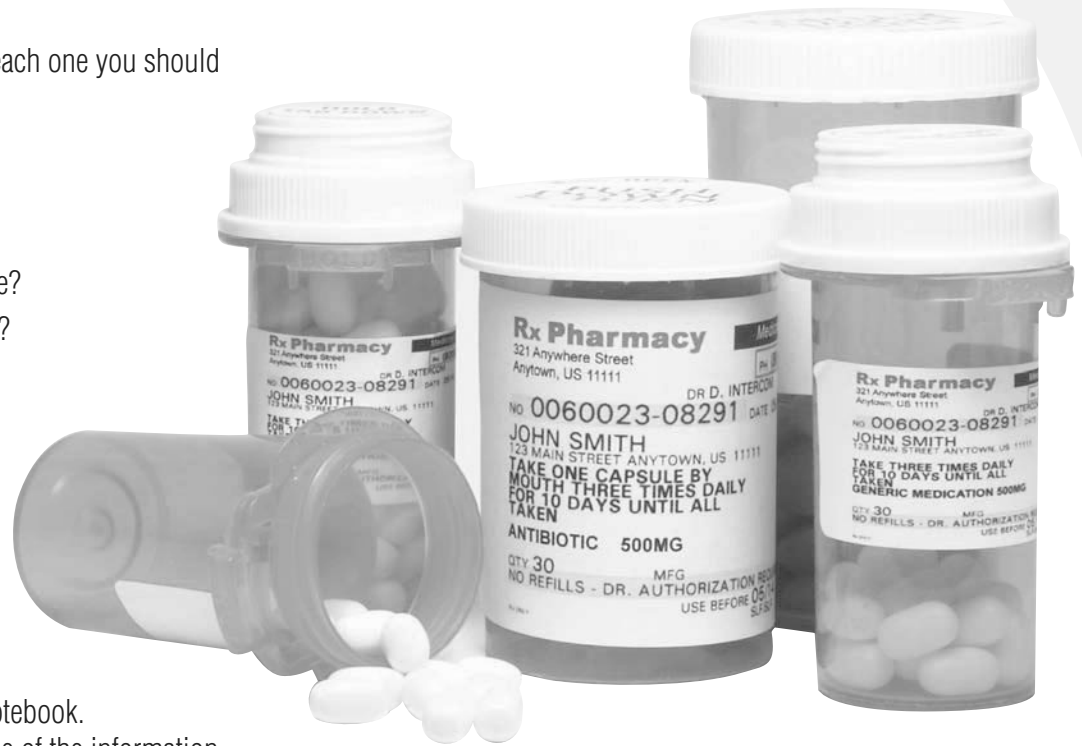


# Medication Lists

# Patient Safety Corner

Your doctors and other health care staff work hard to keep you safe and prevent medication errors. You can stay safer if you take charge of tracking your medications and making sure everyone knows about medications you take. A medication list can make a difference in how well your doctors and other providers can help you. Here are some tips about medication lists:

- Keep a list of your medicines that is up to date. Write down prescriptions and over the counter medications. Keep medications on the list when you no longer take them and note when you stopped. Include vitamins and other supplements.
- Know all about your medications. For each one you should know:
  - Name
  - How much do you take?
  - How often do you take it?
  - Should you take it at a specific time?
  - Should you take it with food or not?
  - What is it for?
- Let your doctors and other health care providers know about your medications. Bring your list with you when you see your doctor, go to the hospital, and when you pick up prescriptions at the pharmacy.
- You don't need to have a special list – use anything that works, including a notebook. The following is an example of the some of the information you should track about your medications:



**Your Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PCP Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Information:	Medication Name	Dose	Directions	Date started	Date stopped	Purpose
<b>Instructions:</b>	<i>Include prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, and herbals. Include medications taken occasionally or as needed;</i>	<i>How many? How much?</i>	<i>How often? How many? When? How? With food or not? Storage-refrigerated?</i>			<i>Reason for taking?</i>
<b>List medications here:</b>	1.					
	2.					
	3.					
	4.					

***If you have questions about your medications or keeping a list, talk with your primary care physician.***

# Preventing and Treating High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is also called hypertension. Blood pressure is the measurement of the force against the walls of your arteries, as the heart pumps blood through the body. High blood pressure affects about one in four adults in the U.S. High blood pressure causes the heart to work harder, and is the number one risk factor for a stroke. High blood pressure must be monitored and treated by medication or lifestyle changes, or a combination of both.

## Prevention

To prevent high blood pressure, make some lifestyle changes that may help control your blood pressure. Avoid smoking. Do not drink large amounts of alcohol, no more than 1 drink a day for women, 2 a day for men. Eat a diet rich in vegetables, fruit, low-fat dairy products and limit saturated fat. Ask your doctor about an exercise regimen. If you are overweight, try to lose a few pounds. Excess body weight adds to strain on the heart and can often be the main cause of high blood pressure. Follow your doctor's recommendations for steps you should take to help prevent (or treat) high blood pressure.

## Diagnosis

Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80 in adults. Regular blood pressure readings higher than 120/80 should be monitored by a doctor, as it may be caused by pre-hypertension. If your blood pressure is high, your doctor should perform several measurements repeated over time, so that the diagnosis can be confirmed. If you are diagnosed with high blood pressure, there are many treatments and lifestyle changes you can make to control your blood pressure. Lowering your blood pressure may lower risk your risk of a stroke. You may be unaware that you have high blood pressure. Most of the time, high blood pressure has no symptoms.

You are at a higher risk for high blood pressure, if you:

- Are African-American
- Have a family history of the disease
- Are overweight
- Eat a diet high in salt
- Smoke
- Have diabetes

## Complications

Uncontrolled high blood pressure can lead to heart attack or stroke, caused by the hardening or thickening of the arteries. Uncontrolled high blood pressure can also cause heart failure.

## Treatment

If you have high blood pressure, there are many steps you can take to lower it. Follow your doctor's advice about exercise, your goal weight, a healthy diet and medication you should take. Smoking is not advisable if you have high blood pressure. If you smoke, ask your doctor about a program that will help you stop. Try to limit alcohol. Some over-the-counter medications and supplements can increase your blood pressure, so tell your doctor about all medications and supplements you take. If lifestyle changes do not lower your blood pressure, there are medicines that can help. Your doctor can advise you of the best medication for you. Schedule regular check-ups with your doctor, so s(he) can make sure your blood pressure is in control.



# Preparing For Your Hospital Visit

## *What should I do before I go to the hospital?*

If you know ahead of time that you will be going to the hospital make sure you know:

- Where will you be going and what needs to be done before you get there?
- What medicines you will be able to take, or not take, before going to the hospital and while you are in the hospital?
- Will you be going home or will you need to go to another facility for special care?
- If you will be going home, what will you need to have ready at home in order to take better care of yourself?

## *What can I do while in the hospital?*

While you are in the hospital and before you are ready to go home, make certain you:

- Ask where you will get help after discharge. If you need to go to a Skilled Nursing Facility, find out what your choices are.
- Ask if you will need any help at home. Make sure you understand what things you can and can not do.

- Ask if you will need any special equipment at home and who will be bringing it.
- Ask about problems you need to watch for and what to do about them. Who you should call if you see any of these problems.
- Have names and phone numbers of all the doctors who took care of you while you were in the hospital.
- Understand all the medicines you will be taking when you go home. Some of them may have changes or new ones added.
- If needed, know how to change any bandages or take care of any stitches or tubes, etc. before you leave.
- Read and understand your discharge instructions.

## *What should I do after I go home?*

- Fill all your prescriptions right away
- Make all your follow-up doctor's appointments as told.
- See your Primary Care Physician within 7 days.  
Take all your medicines with you so he/she knows what you are now taking.



# AssuredRx

## Home Delivery Pharmacy

Please read your Evidence of Coverage for your selected plan to confirm eligibility for this benefit.



Have you considered using a home delivery pharmacy for your prescription needs? There are many advantages to having your prescriptions filled using a home delivery pharmacy. Here are just a few:

- **SAVE on drug costs, transportation cost and TIME!**

Your drug costs will be less because you only pay a 2-month co-pay but you will receive a 3-month supply on most brand medications and the total drug cost of both Brand and Generic medications that counts towards your total drug cost is less through **AssuredRx** than with retail pharmacies. This means you will not reach your donut hole as quickly. When using home delivery, you get a 90-day supply sent, at no charge, directly to your front door, saving you several trips to the pharmacy, gas and time! **AssuredRx** gives you several easy and convenient ways of refilling or transferring prescriptions – by phone, by email or through the **AssuredRx** website at [www.assuredrx.com](http://www.assuredrx.com).

- The **AssuredRx** system will monitor your medications and perform drug utilization reviews and drug interaction checks always keeping your well-being, and safety in mind.

- You can opt to enroll in the auto-refill program, which helps to ensure your medications will be sent automatically to your door as soon as they are due! Even when you have no refills remaining, **AssuredRx** will kindly notify your doctor and get the necessary authorization required to refill your prescriptions.

- **AssuredRx** has a Pharmacist available just a phone call away to help answer any questions or concerns you have about the medication you are taking.

The **AssuredRx** Team is ready and waiting for you to take advantage of the home delivery pharmacy for all of your prescription medication needs. You can conveniently and quickly transfer your prescriptions today and begin benefiting from all their services. **AssuredRx** can be reached at (727)-451-6815 or toll free (888) 987-9977 or submit a transfer request through the **AssuredRx** website at [www.assuredrx.com](http://www.assuredrx.com).



# America's 1st Choice

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## Member Newsletter

HEALTH & WELLNESS INFORMATION



### Quality Management

The quality of health care you receive matters to you, and to us. We are committed to improving members' health and promoting healthy lifestyles. To support this commitment, we maintain a Quality Management (QM) Program with established goals and structure. The primary goal of the QM program is to achieve quality care and services for our members. Through this program, we monitor and evaluate the quality of care provided to our members. Opportunities to improve are identified on an on-going basis. For more information on our QM program, please visit our website. You can call Member Services 1-866-321-3947 for a copy of our QM Program.

#### Quality Management Program: Measuring Success

Each year, we evaluate the Quality Management program. We also assess

progress toward meeting our goals. One of the tools we use to evaluate the QM program is HEDIS (Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set). HEDIS is the most widely used rating system in health care. Most health plans, including America's 1st Choice, use HEDIS to measure the quality of services we provide to our members. HEDIS is used like a report card, and health plans receive a score on certain services, tests and procedures. Using HEDIS, we

establish performance goals, develop and implement improvement plans each year.

*For more information on HEDIS or the QM Program, please check our website: Utilization and Quality Management section.*

