

Important Notice: Influenza and Pneumonia Vaccines

This communication applies to the Medicaid programs for Simply Healthcare Plans, Inc. and Clear Health Alliance (Simply), the Florida Healthy Kids (FHK) program for Simply and the Medicare Advantage program for Simply.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant drop in well visits has resulted in vaccination delays. Many patients may have cancelled or missed appointments and essential vaccines – putting them at risk for dangerous diseases. Simply Healthcare Plans, Inc. and Clear Health Alliance (Simply) has prioritized immunization compliance efforts to address concerns related to secondary outbreaks of vaccine-preventable illnesses.

We are encouraging our provider partners to promote the importance of influenza (flu) and pneumonia vaccines with their patients. Health care providers should use every opportunity during the influenza vaccination season to administer influenza vaccines to all eligible persons to protect vulnerable populations, the healthcare system, and other critical infrastructure. Flu and pneumonia vaccines are covered benefits for Simply members.

Pneumonia Drug	Eligible Members
Pneumovax/PCV13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Florida Healthy Kids members • Simply Medicaid members • Clear Health Alliance members • Medicare members
Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine (PPSV23) *Recommended for all adults >65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Florida Healthy Kids members • Simply Medicaid members • Clear Health Alliance members • Medicare members

Simply providers should ensure they are providing a safe environment to administer flu and pneumonia vaccines for their patients.

Guidance on providing well-care during the COVID-19 pandemic

- All well-care visits, including those to administer vaccines, should occur in person whenever possible and within the provider’s office to ensure the maintenance and establishment of care continuity.

<https://provider.simplyhealthcareplans.com/florida-provider>

<https://provider.clearhealthalliance.com/florida-provider>

Simply Healthcare Plans, Inc. is a Managed Care Plan with a Florida Medicaid contract. Simply Healthcare Plans, Inc. dba Clear Health Alliance is a Managed Care Plan with a Florida Medicaid contract.

- Telehealth services that have been successfully implemented to provide the appropriate elements of a well visit should continue to be supported and **followed by a timely in-person visit.**
- Providers should identify patients who have missed well visits and/or recommended vaccinations and contact them to schedule in person appointments.

Strategies to ensure provider office safety

- Inform families about your implemented safety strategies.
- Schedule well-visits and sick-visits at different times of the day.
- Separate well patients from sick patients by spatially placing patients in different areas.
- Collaborate with providers in the community to identify separate locations for providing well visits for patients.
- Create a process for phone check-ins or in car waiting rooms.

Helpful Tips

- Remind your patients to schedule appointments for flu vaccines.
- Access resources on vaccine misconceptions and talking points available through CDC and the Simply Healthcare Plans Provider websites.
- Continue to advocate for the flu vaccine and for early fall vaccinations. The CDC recommends that people get a flu vaccine by the end of October. Getting vaccinated later, however, can still be beneficial. As long as flu viruses are circulating, it is not too late to get vaccinated, even in January or later.*
- Getting vaccinated early (for example, in July or August) is likely to be associated with reduced protection against flu infection later in the flu season, particularly among older adults. **
- Children who need two doses of vaccine to be protected should start the vaccination process sooner, because the two doses must be given at least four weeks apart. Your strong influenza vaccine recommendation is one of the most important factors in patients accepting the vaccine. **

Some providers may not be able to provide well visits, including provision of flu and pneumonia vaccines, for all patients in their practice due to circumstances related to COVID-19. **If a practice can provide only limited well visits, providers are encouraged to prioritize newborn care and vaccination of infants and young children (through 24 months of age) when possible.**

Health Crowd Text Campaign

Health Crowd is a third-party text messaging program that sends members health education on well visits, shots and other health-related conditions. Health Crowd will send flu season related texts encouraging members to go to these important visits and checkups. Members are targeted for outreach based on diagnosis, condition and age. Simply is using this program to target members as another method of outreach to target members.

We advise members to consult with their PCP for the pneumococcal vaccine. Our member education efforts will continue throughout the season. Thank you for promoting the importance of flu and pneumonia prevention in your practice. Together, we can help minimize the impact of the flu and pneumonia on patients, their families and the community.

Resources:

- CDC Guidance
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/misconceptions.htm> *
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/vaccinations.htm> **
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/news/newsletters/imwrks/2020/2020-03.html>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/actions-prevent-flu.htm>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/season/faq-flu-season-2020-2021.htm>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/rr/rr6908a1.htm>
- Similarities and Differences between Flu and COVID-19
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/flu-vs-covid19.htm>
- Florida Department of Health COVID-19 Updates:
 - <https://floridahealthcovid19.gov/>
 - <https://floridahealthcovid19.gov/health-care-providers/>
- AAP Guidance on Providing Pediatric Well Care During COVID-19:
 - <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/guidance-on-providing-pediatric-well-care-during-covid-19/>
- Florida Department of Health Guidance
 - <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/index.html>
- 2020 Immunization Schedule (Child and Adolescent):
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/child-adolescent.html>
- 2020 Immunization Schedule (Adult):
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/adult.html>