

# Member Newsletter

Summer 2019



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## Looking for a Doctor?

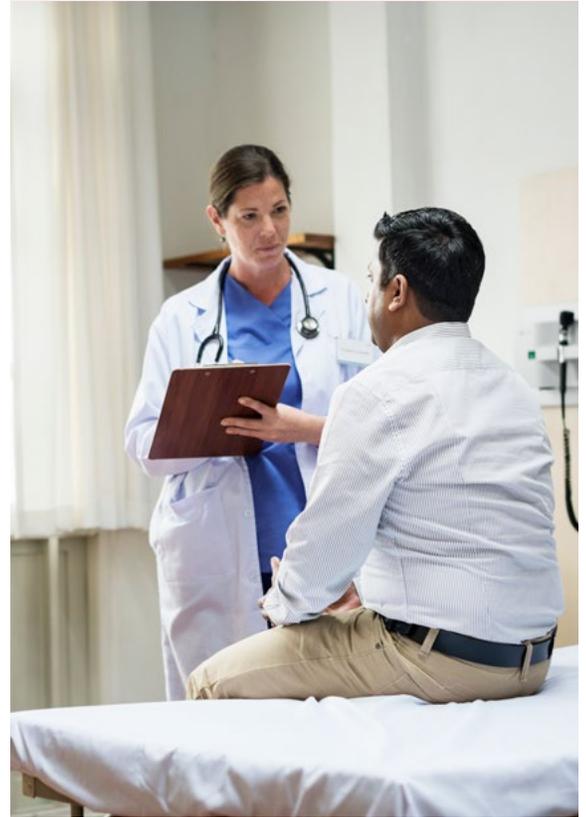
Virginia Premier wants to make sure that you can get the health care you need, when you need it. That's why we have a wide range of doctors and other health care specialists all across Virginia.

Even more, we follow specific guidelines for your access to health care. These standards take into account:

**Time:** how soon you can set an appointment with a doctor or other provider

**Distance:** how far you have to travel to get to an appointment

If you'd like to learn more about these standards, just see the Member Handbook or Evidence of Coverage (EOC) for your plan.



**To find a doctor, just use the information below for your Virginia Premier plan:**

Elite Individual and Elite Family (Medallion 4.0 and FAMIS)	Elite Plus (CCC Plus)	Advantage Elite (HMO SNP), Gold (HMO) and Platinum (HMO)(Medicare)
Visit our website at <a href="http://virginiapremier.com/find-a-doctor">virginiapremier.com/find-a-doctor</a>		
See page 11 of this newsletter to contact Member Services		
See your Member Handbook <a href="#">here</a>	See your Member Handbook <a href="#">here</a>	See your Evidence of Coverage <a href="#">here</a>



## Advance Directives

### “Do I Need an Advance Directive?”

Suppose you’re in a bad accident, are unconscious or can’t communicate with your doctors: who decides what medical care you get?

This is just the kind of situation that an advance directive is made for. And you may have already heard of it by other names:

living will	personal directive
advance decision	medical directive

Whichever name it’s given, the basic idea is the same: an advance directive lets you spell out what kind of medical treatment you’d like to get in case you’re incapacitated and can’t speak with the doctors taking care of you.

### Making an Advance Directive

As a legal statement of your medical decisions, you should think carefully about what to put in your advance directive.

It’s a good idea to talk with your doctor, as well as close family and friends, about what your advance directive will say. If you’re on Medicare, you can even schedule an Advance Care Planning session with your doctor or a staff member, and Medicare will cover the cost of the visit.

You don’t need a lawyer to create an advance directive. And you can always change or revoke an advance directive that you’ve already created.

To find out how to create an advance directive for yourself, call our Member Services (contact information on page 11.) You can also go to [VirginiaAdvanceDirectives.org](http://VirginiaAdvanceDirectives.org).

### Advance Directive vs Health Care Power of Attorney

Another option is a durable power of attorney (POA). Just like a financial POA, which gives one person the ability to make financial decisions for someone else, a medical or health care POA lets you choose someone to make medical decisions for you, in case you can’t make them for yourself.

So, while an advance directive states what decisions you want made, a medical POA states who you want making medical decisions for you. Medical POAs often appoint a spouse, parent, sibling or child as having power to make medical decisions.

### Make It Easy to Find

If you choose to make an advance directive or medical POA, make sure you share it with your doctors. And put it someplace easy to find in case you have to go to the emergency room. Because doctors can’t follow it if they can’t find it.



## Help After the Loss of a Child

The loss of a child is perhaps the worst tragedy for a parent or caregiver to bear.

For **Medallion 4.0** members who have lost a child 22 weeks or older and under the age of 18 years, we offer help for you as you go through the process of grieving. These services are available even if your child was a Medallion 4.0 member but you weren't.

Please let us know if you'd like our help. Just call us at 1-800-727-7536 (Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 8:00 pm; TTY: 711), and we'll put you in touch with our **Bereavement Program**. From there, we'll be able to put you in touch with community resources, including social work and mental health services.

**Elite Plus (CCC Plus)** members can get in touch with their Care Coordinator. They'll be able to provide guidance and connect you to community resources.

You don't have to do this alone.

## Bringing You the Best Care We Can

At Virginia Premier, we work with doctors, nurses and hospitals to bring you the best care possible. And we're constantly looking at the latest medical research. That way, we can find out which treatments do the best job of treating an illness.

And then we work to make those treatments available to you.

There are certain conditions that we're especially focused on right now:

- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- Diabetes
- Depression
- Substance Use Disorder (SUD)
- Hypertension (also known as high blood pressure (HBP))
- Prenatal Care (especially High-risk Prenatal Care)



We offer health programs to support members with these and other conditions. If you'd like to learn about them, visit your plan's website:

<p>If you're a member of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Elite Individual</li><li>• Elite Family</li><li>• Elite Plus</li></ul> <p>Follow this link for <a href="#">Medicaid health programs</a>.</p>	<p>If you're a member of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advantage Gold</li><li>• Advantage Platinum</li><li>• Advantage Elite</li></ul> <p>Follow this link for <a href="#">Medicare health programs</a>.</p>
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Whatever your health care needs, be sure to speak with your doctor about finding a treatment plan. Along with Virginia Premier, they're looking out for you.

## Different Cultures, One Team

For you to get the best care possible, you and your doctors need to be able to communicate. Cultural differences, however, are sometimes a barrier to good communication.

To keep this from being a problem, we offer our providers training on how to bridge these differences. It's important that doctors see you as a unique person, showing you respect and understanding so that the two of you can find common ground when it comes to setting treatment plans.

Below are some of the things we suggest to our doctors to keep in mind. Look through them, and see if they make sense to you, and if they give you any ideas about other ways to keep cultural differences from being an issue.

### We suggest that our doctors:

- Learn more about a patient's culture by noticing how their family members interact. Finding out how a family copes with crises can be helpful in developing treatment options or discharge plans.
- Find out how long the family has been here. The less time they have been in the U.S., the more influence their native culture has.
- Understand that culture can affect some behaviors. For example, some cultures may require same-gender health care providers. And avoiding eye contact is sometimes a sign of respect, and shouldn't be taken as indifference.
- Keep a list of trained medical interpreters. Unless necessary, don't let family members act as interpreters. Family members may not be objective, and patients may be uncomfortable discussing certain things with family present.
- Pay attention to cultural differences that may affect care. For instance, in cultures that limit women's responsibilities, a mother may be unwilling to sign a consent form for their child.
- Provide resources and training to office staff on awareness of and sensitivity to cultural differences. Search the Internet for information on cultural competency and cultural diversity. Libraries and book stores are also a good resource.
- Be careful about stereotypes. Don't assume that everyone from a certain country is alike. Culture and beliefs vary widely in the U.S.; the same is true of other countries.
- Take our Cultural Competency Course, which offers instruction for doctors on how to treat and care for members of diverse backgrounds.

Can you think of anything you could do to make better connections with your doctors?





## **You're in Charge**

One of the most important factors in making sure you get the right care is you. Patients who are more involved with their care and take part in every decision tend to get better results.

There are lots of ways you can take charge of your care. One is to call Member Services and speak with one of our care coordinators or health educators. And here are some more to consider:

### **Know Your Prescriptions**

Make sure your doctor knows about all the drugs you are taking. This includes over-the-counter drugs and dietary supplements, such as vitamins and herbs.

### **Medicines and Supplements**

Better yet, bring all your medicines and supplements to your doctor visits. That way, your doctor can see them all and determine whether there are any problems. It also helps keep your records up to date.

### **Allergies**

Tell your doctor about any allergies or bad reactions you have had to any medicine.

### **Doctors' Notes**

Make sure you can read your doctor's handwriting. If you cannot read your doctor's handwriting, your pharmacist might not be able to either.

### **Get Answers You Can Understand**

Sometimes medical terms get in the way of knowing about the drugs your doctors give you. Don't be afraid to ask:

- What is the drug for?
- How do I take it, and for how long?
- What side effects are likely?
- What if they occur?
- Can I take it with other medicines or dietary supplements?
- What food, drink or activities should I avoid while taking this drug?
- Is this the drug that my doctor prescribed?

## Clear Instructions

Drug labels can be hard to understand. For example, ask if “four times daily” means taking a dose every six hours around the clock or just during regular waking hours.

## Liquid Medicine

Ask your pharmacist for the best device to measure your liquid medicine. For example, many people use household teaspoons, which often do not hold a true teaspoon of liquid. Special devices, like marked syringes, help people measure the right dose.

## Side Effects

Ask for written information about the potential side effects of your medicine. If you know what might happen, you will be better prepared if something does happen.

## Leaving the Hospital

When you are being discharged from the hospital, ask your doctor to explain the treatment plan you will follow at home. This includes new medicines, follow-up appointments and finding out when you can get back to your regular activities.

## Be Certain About Surgery

If you’re having surgery, make sure your doctor and surgeon confirm with each other exactly what will be done. This will help prevent any harmful errors.

## Hospital Choice

Choose a hospital that is known for the type of surgery you’re getting. Patients tend to have better results at hospitals with surgical experience.

## Speak Up

You have a right to question anyone who is involved with your care.

## Care Coordination

Have someone – such as your primary care doctor or care coordinator – help organize your care. This is especially helpful if you’re in the hospital or have several health problems.

## Health Information

Don’t assume every doctor has all your health information. Make sure your doctors have all the records they need.



## Use the Buddy System

Take a friend or family member to appointments with you. You never know when you might need their help or input.

## More is Not Always Better

Find out if a test or treatment is really needed. You could be better off without it.

## Get Your Results

No news isn’t always good news. If you have a test done, ask how and when you will get the results.

## Available Treatments

Learn about your condition and available treatments. A good place to start is the Effective Health Care Program at [effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov](http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov).

Internet Citation: 20 Tips to Help Prevent Medical Errors. Retrieved June 2019. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. [ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/care-planning/errors/20tips/index.html](http://ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/care-planning/errors/20tips/index.html)



## Keeping Your Care in Mind

Keeping our members healthy and safe is our top priority at Virginia Premier. Our Member Safety Program is constantly working behind the scenes to look out for you.

Here are some of the things we do:

- We visit the doctors in our network to see how well they're looking after you, and whether they're offering the best care.
- During these visits, we share the [National Patient Safety Goals®](#) with them.
- We include doctors on several Virginia Premier committees that focus on member care, and they play an important role in our Member Safety Program.
- Our regular newsletters to members and doctors include tips on how they can give or receive the best quality health care.
- We keep our doctors updated on the best health care practices, and the best way to connect with patients from different cultures or who speak different languages.

## Making Quality a Priority

We're constantly working to improve the care and coverage you receive. We know that we can't just be satisfied with what we did last year, we have to be looking forward to how we can do better next year.

But we don't just look at ourselves to see how good of a job we're doing. We also get evaluated by outside experts.

For instance, the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) is an organization that rates health plans all across the country and they recently rated us Commendable. NCQA uses several performance measures to evaluate us each year, and we set high goals for how well we want to do on those measures. We know that getting a good rating isn't a one-time event, but an ongoing effort to support quality services for our members.

Beyond the rankings and numbers, we hope you've noticed that the care you get keeps getting better. Here are some of the things that we do behind the scenes to make quality a priority:

- Each year, we have members and providers fill out surveys about their health care experiences. One is called the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS®), and is used by many health organizations across the country. Other surveys we use are:
  - Provider Satisfaction Survey
  - Access and Availability Survey
  - After Hours Survey
- We speak with Medicaid members in our Member Advisory Committee (MAC) meetings. These meetings are another way to get feedback about what does and doesn't work.
- We share information about patient safety with our members and providers. On our website and through educational materials, we outline things members and providers can do to improve the care they receive or give.
- We have a Member Safety Program that looks out for our members (see p. 9).
- We review and update our Clinical Practice Guidelines and share them with our providers (see p. 9).
- In every area we serve, we hold Provider Education Meetings (PEM) at least four times a year.
- We get feedback from providers in our Provider Advisory Committee meetings.



## Contact us

### Medicare Advantage (Gold, Platinum, and Elite)

Call 1-877-739-1370, TTY: 711. From October 1 to March 31, we are open daily from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, 7 days a week. From April 1 to September 30, we are open Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. On certain holidays and on weekends from April 1 through September 30, your call will be handled by our automated phone system.

### Medallion 4.0 (Elite Individual and Elite Family)

Call 1-800-727-7536, TTY: 711. We are open Monday through Friday, excluding certain holidays, from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm.

### CCC Plus (Elite Plus)

Call 1-877-719-7358, TTY: 711. We are open Monday through Friday, excluding certain holidays, from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm.

You can also contact us online at: [VirginiaPremier.com](https://www.VirginiaPremier.com)

Virginia Premier is an HMO and HMO SNP organization with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in Virginia Premier depends on contract renewal. Benefit information in this newsletter is not a complete description of benefits. Contact the plan for more information. Limitations, co-payments and restrictions may apply. Benefits, premiums and/or co-payments may change on January 1 of each year. The provider network may change at any time. You will receive notice when necessary. You must continue to pay your Medicare Part B premium. This information is available for free in other languages.

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