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Prenatal Care: A State and National Priority

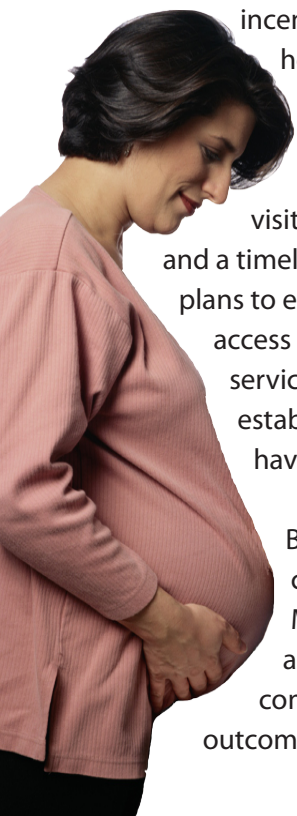
Prenatal care is a very important part of the work of Medicaid managed care plans and providers. A modest up front investment can potentially save lives and millions of dollars in hospital costs.

The Centers for Disease Control's Healthy People 2010 Initiative sets a national goal of increasing to 90 percent the number of pregnant women who receive early and adequate prenatal care. Early and adequate care is defined as having an initial prenatal visit during the first trimester of pregnancy and receiving regular care until delivery. Routine, preventive prenatal visits may reduce the incidence of low birth weight, infant mortality and long-term health complications for the mother and child. In addition to prenatal care, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends that women have a postpartum visit four to six weeks after delivery in order to detect potential maternal complications.

Quality Measures

Targeted quality improvement initiatives, such as prenatal incentive programs, can lead to improved health outcomes for managed care members. The Office of Ohio Health Plans monitors performance measures such as initiation of the first prenatal visit, the frequency of prenatal care visits and a timely postpartum visit for managed care plans to ensure that Medicaid members have access to high-quality, necessary health care services. Since these quality measures were established, Medicaid managed care plans have shown continuous improvement.

By investing in preventive and prenatal care for pregnant women, Ohio Medicaid's managed care program is able to reduce the likelihood of health complications and promote positive health outcomes.



Managed Care Plans Focus on Prenatal Care

Throughout the course of a woman's pregnancy, Medicaid managed care plans and providers can play an integral role in emphasizing the importance of preventive health visits and promoting healthy behaviors for the expectant mother throughout her pregnancy.

Some managed care plans offer incentives to encourage pregnant women to comply with prenatal and postpartum visits and promote healthy birth outcomes. All Ohio Medicaid managed care plans offer some type of prenatal incentive program. Examples include:

- Educational materials are mailed to the expectant mother and include helpful information to provide care for themselves and their babies. Several managed care plans also include a community resource guide, which, for example, may highlight the availability of parenting classes in the community or public transportation services.
- High-risk pregnant women may receive individualized care management and benefit from direct contact and targeted interventions, which could include home visits or frequent contact by telephone. At a minimum, managed care plans offer care management services to pregnant teens age 17 and younger.
- Appointment reminder postcards are sent to the pregnant women and continue after delivery to promote the importance of the infant receiving regular Healthcheck visits (Ohio's EPSDT program) and immunizations.
- Pregnant women who complete all their required pre- and post-natal care activities are eligible for incentives designed by the managed care plans. These incentives help encourage expectant mothers to receive critical pregnancy-related care and to help encourage the healthy development of their babies.