

Healthy Habits

HEALTHY HABIT #3

Learn about health issues that matter to you and your family

To ensure that we are getting the best health care possible, we need to become advocates for ourselves and our family members, and take an active role in the health care process.

Most of us wouldn't buy a car without researching the various makes and models, and weighing the advantages against the costs. Our own health concerns, and those of our loved ones, deserve at least as much attention to detail. A thorough understanding of pertinent health issues is vital to making wise and informed health choices, particularly when a chronic health condition is involved or when treatment options are being considered.

Costco Benefits make it easy. Simply log on to Aetna Navigator, at www.costcobenefits.com, and access the Intellihealth Web Search to quickly research accurate information on almost any health-related topic. You can also sign up for a daily e-mail newsletter to keep abreast of all the latest news in health care. The "My Health Programs" portion of the site provides more information about Aetna's health programs for asthma, diabetes, coronary artery disease, congestive heart failure and maternity. The site also has a hospital comparison tool to help you find the best local hospital for specific surgical procedures.

Once armed with the facts, here's how to work with your health-care professional:

- Choose a doctor* who is knowledgeable about your condition and who is willing to work respectfully with you.
- Make a list of concerns and questions to discuss during your visits and keep asking them until you understand the answers. (If you have many questions, let the office know ahead of time so they can schedule accordingly.)
- If needed, bring a family member or friend along to your appointment to help you take notes and offer moral support.
- Be sure you understand the doctor's instructions before you leave.
- Make sure you understand what medicines you should be taking, why they have been prescribed, how to take them, and any possible side effects or drug interactions.
- Be honest and let the doctor know whether you are following recommendations about diet, lifestyle and medications.

**When you need a specialist, look for a doctor who has earned the "Aexcel" designation (this program is available in 70 percent of our locations). Physicians are designated Aexcel only after an in-depth analysis of their medical records substantiates that they are in the upper tier for delivering efficient and effective care. You do not need a referral to an Aexcel specialist and, depending on your benefit plan, your out-of-pocket costs for seeing this doctor may be lower. You can find Aexcel physicians at www.costcobenefits.com by selecting "Find a Provider."*