Coordination of Benefits: Who Pays First? Second?

If you and/or your covered family members have health coverage from more than one source (for example, a person may be covered under a spouse’s health plan or a child may be covered under the health plans of both parents), you may be familiar with the term Coordination of Benefits (COB). COB helps you maximize benefit coverage which, in turn, lowers your out-of-pocket costs.

The COB rules of your plan determine which plan is primary. That plan’s benefits are applied to the claim first. The unpaid balance is usually paid by the secondary plan to the limit of its responsibility. Benefits are thus “coordinated” among all of the health plans, and payments do not exceed 100% of charges for the covered services.

Which is the Primary Plan? Secondary?

COB requires that one plan pay first. But, which plan should? Here are some general rules about who pays first:

- The plan covering you as an employee is primary. The primary plan always pays the same benefits as it would if there were no secondary plan.
- The plan covering you as a dependent is secondary.
- When two plans cover the same child are a dependent, the child’s coverage will be as follows:
  - The plan of the parent whose birthday falls earlier in the year provides primary coverage.
  - If both parents have the same birthday, the plan that has been in effect the longest is primary.
  - The birthday rule is superseded when a court order or custody rule applies.

In unique circumstances (e.g. out-of-state health plans or self-funded health plans) or when Medicare plans are involved, there may be exceptions to these rules.

How You Can Help With COB Savings

Current, accurate benefit information is essential in making sure you receive the full advantage of your benefit coverage as well as avoid delays in claim payments. Below are suggestions on how you can help.

- Be sure your doctor’s office has your current benefit information so they can submit the claim to the insurance carriers.
- Respond promptly to requests from insurance carriers to update your other insurance information—even if you don’t have other coverage.
- Update your COB information anytime you and/or your covered family member have a change in benefit coverage. Go to CMU Choices Benefits portal under the Coordination of Benefits tab and follow the instructions.

Earning Virgin Pulse Points is as easy as 1-2-3

1. Upload your steps daily and earn 10 points per 1,000 steps taken (up to 140 points daily)
2. Complete your daily cards to earn 20 points per card — customize these cards by selecting your interests under the Tracking tab on your home page
3. Track your healthy habits daily — track 3 per day to earn 10 points for each habit tracked

Check your posture. The seams of your shirt can be a good indicator of strength imbalances between your chest and biceps (anterior) and your back (posterior). Next time you’re wearing a T-shirt, stand in front of a mirror to see if the stitching from the neck to the shoulder forms a straight line. If the lines turn slightly inward from the neck to the shoulders (anterior tilt), you may want to focus more attention strengthening your back and improving your posture. A fitness tip from Shape.