

PrimePartners

for Case Managers

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Importance of Oral Health Care During Pregnancy

Amanda Englund, Dental Services Coordinator

If you work with members who are pregnant, please remind them of the importance of oral health during pregnancy, both for themselves and for their baby.

Let members know *why* oral health matters during pregnancy

Hormone changes during pregnancy can increase the risk for gingivitis, an early stage of gum disease. If not treated, gum disease can lead to bone loss, infection, and loose teeth. Some studies have shown a correlation between gingivitis and pre-term birth and low birth weight. Pregnancy can also increase the risk of cavities. This may be due to changes in eating habits, like increased snacking. In addition, morning sickness that leads to vomiting can cause tooth erosion.

Let members know *what* they can do

Support pregnant members in maintaining good oral health during pregnancy. Encourage members to do the following:

- Let their dental provider know that they are pregnant.
- Get regular dental care. Reassure members that routine dental exams are safe during pregnancy.
- Brush at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and floss at least once a day.
- Rinse their mouth after vomiting. Suggest using 1 teaspoon of baking soda in 1 cup of water. It's best to wait at least 30 minutes after vomiting before brushing.

Source: March of Dimes, "Dental Health During Pregnancy," February 2023, www.marchofdimes.org/find-support/topics/pregnancy/dental-health-during-pregnancy. 

First Aid Supplies: An Important Part of Planning for Summer Fun

Natasha Jevnager, RN, Special Needs Plan Care Coordinator

Summertime in Minnesota often means warm weather, sunny days, campfires, and more time outdoors! Unfortunately, it can also mean ticks, mosquitoes, sunburn, poison ivy exposure, and more. Having a first aid kit on hand can help members treat minor issues and injuries on the spot.

Some first aid kits come preassembled, but members can also put a kit together themselves. Commonly recommended items to include are sunscreen; aloe vera gel; over-the-counter (OTC) cold and allergy treatments; wound care items such as bandages, cotton balls, and antibiotic ointment; anti-itch cream; cold packs; and pain relievers. Additional items such as tweezers, gauze, scissors, and adhesive tape can also be helpful.

PrimeWest Senior Health Complete (HMO SNP) and Prime Health Complete (HMO SNP) members may use their \$25 a month OTC benefit to purchase a variety of first aid items. You can help members find eligible items at www.mybenefitscenter.com. 

Pharmacy Tidbits On-Demand Training

Katie Brand, PharmD, Pharmacy Manager

The PrimeWest Health Pharmacy team recently updated the “Pharmacy Tidbits” presentation in the [On-Demand Trainings](#) section of the *County Case Management Manual*. The presentation includes information about coverage for medications and continuous glucose monitoring, where to find formulary documents, our pharmacy benefit manager, and more! If you have questions, please email the Pharmacy team at prw_pharmacyteam@primewest.org. 

Wildfire Smoke and Its Effects on Health

Natasha Jevnager, RN, Special Needs Plan Care Coordinator

Smoke from wildfires has become an increasingly frequent source of air pollution in the United States and Canada (MDH). It has been linked to a variety of health issues, and there is no known safe level of exposure. Smoke can travel thousands of miles, meaning air quality can be affected from fires burning far away. “Exposure can impact your health even at very low levels. As smoke levels increase, your health risk increases. Air quality may be poor even if you can't see or smell smoke” (Canada). This is not surprising given that “wildfire smoke is about 10 times as toxic as the regular air pollution from the burning of fossil fuels” (Jordan).

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) details the health effects associated with wildfire smoke, noting the following:

Short-term effects over just a few days can include:

- Coughing, wheezing, or shortness of breath.
- Burning eyes or throat.
- Headaches, dizziness, or nausea.
- Worsening of asthma and or COPD symptoms.
- Increased risk of heart failure, heart attack, or stroke.
- Increased risk of emergency room visits, hospital admissions, and adverse birth outcomes.

While wildfire smoke is unsafe for everyone, some people are at an increased risk, including children; adults age 65 and over; pregnant people; those with existing heart disease, asthma, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD); and those with increased exposure, such as people who work outdoors and those experiencing homelessness (MDH).

Explaining the dangers of wildfire smoke and how to track air quality can help members understand the risk. The Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Air Quality Index (AQI) is one useful tool. The AQI is divided into six color-coded categories to help people evaluate the air quality in their location (AirNow). The higher the Index value, the lower the air quality. The following image from MDH is a simplified view of the EPA’s AQI.

Daily AQI Color	Levels of Concern	Description of Air Quality
Green	0 to 50	Good
Yellow	51 to 100	Moderate
Orange	101 to 150	Unhealthy for sensitive groups
Red	151 to 200	Unhealthy for everyone
Purple	201 to 300	Very unhealthy for everyone
Maroon	300+	Hazardous for everyone

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency posts [current air quality conditions](#) utilizing this index, and people can sign up to get air quality alerts by email.

When the AQI is high, meaning air quality is poor, encourage members to limit their exposure.

- Stay indoors and keep windows and doors closed if possible
- Find an indoor public space with air conditioning, such as a library, community center, or mall
- Set air conditioning to recirculate instead of using fresh air intake
- Avoid smoking, frying food, burning candles, or vacuuming

If a member must go outside, encourage them to limit strenuous activities, wear a well-fitting face mask (e.g., N95, KN95, etc.), and take breaks in clean-air spaces. Members should keep vehicle windows closed and set the ventilation to recirculate.

Please also stress the importance of paying attention to any new or worsening symptoms and seeking medical attention as needed for difficulty breathing, chest pain, persistent cough or sneezing, eye irritation, or dizziness or confusion (MDH). If a member isn't sure if they should seek treatment, they can call PrimeWest Health's 24-hour nurse line at **1-866-201-4601** (TTY 711), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. Nurses can help members decide whether to take care of themselves at home, make an appointment with their primary care provider, go to urgent care or the emergency room (ER), or call **911**. The nurse line is available to all PrimeWest Health members at no cost.

Sources:

- AirNow, "Air Quality Index (AQI) Basics," accessed April 14, 2026, www.airnow.gov/aqi/aqi-basics.
- Government of Canada, "Wildfire Smoke and Your Health," August 12, 2025, www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/healthy-living/wildfire-smoke-health.html.
- Jordan, Rob, "What We Know about the Health Effects of Wildfire," Stanford Report, January 10, 2025, <https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2025/01/assessing-wildfire-health-risks>.
- MDH, "Wildfire Smoke – A Growing Health Concern," January 13, 2026, www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/emergency/natural/wildfires.html. 

Mental Health Outpatient Services

Danielle Turner, LADC, Behavioral Health Team Lead

PrimeWest Health does not require a Service Authorization for mental health outpatient services. This is a direct access service, which means members can see a mental health outpatient provider that is not in the PrimeWest Health network as long as the provider is willing to accept PrimeWest Health payment as payment in full.

Members can find a list of network mental health outpatient providers in the PrimeWest Health *Provider and Pharmacy Directory*. To access this document, go to www.primewest.org/programs and click the name of the appropriate program. Then click *Provider and Pharmacy Directory* in the orange box on the left side of the page labeled “Member Materials.”

- For Families and Children, MinnesotaCare, Minnesota Senior Care Plus (MSC+), or Special Needs BasicCare (SNBC), look under the section called “Mental Health Providers – Outpatient.”
- For PrimeWest Senior Health Complete or Prime Health Complete, look in Section C under “Behavioral Health Providers.” Within that listing, look for providers under the “Outpatient” heading. (For purposes of the *Directory*, “mental health” and “behavioral health” have the same meaning.)

Many providers offer services via telehealth. These providers are noted in the directories as “☎ Telehealth available.”

If you or a member needs help finding an outpatient mental health provider, call Member Services at 1-866-431-0801 (toll free). 

Summer Asthma and Diabetes Camps: A Chance to Learn and Have Fun!

Heather Keating, LPN, Population Health Specialist

PrimeWest Health covers all registration fees for qualified asthma and diabetes summer camps for children who are PrimeWest Health members when camp begins. These camps are a great chance for youth to have fun, learn how to take control of their conditions, and form a community of friends with similar concerns. We encourage all eligible members to attend.

- Camp Superkids for kids with asthma
 - Overnight camp for kids ages 7 – 16
 - August 23 – 27 in Loretto, MN
- Camp Sweet Life for kids with diabetes
 - Day camp for kids ages 5 – 7; overnight camp for kids ages 8 – 15
 - July 26 – 30 in Maple Lake, MN

If you know a member who would benefit from attending an asthma or diabetes health camp this summer, please contact:

Leah Anderson, Population Health Manager

1-320-335-5272

leah.anderson@primewest.org 

Summer Food Resources

Skyler Jibben, CMA, Community Health Worker

Summer can be a time to unwind, but it often brings added stress for those experiencing food insecurity. Many families depend on school meals to help stretch their monthly budgets, and when summer arrives, that resource is no longer available.

Please share the following resources with members so they can find free food programs available in their area this summer:

- [The Food Group – Find Help](#) – Use the search function to find local food shelves
- [Help Me Connect – Basic Needs](#) – Use the site to search for local food resources as well as services and resources to help with other basic needs
- [Hunger Impact Partners – Mobile App: Free Meals for Kids](#) – Scan the QR code to download the no-cost Free Meals for Kids app to find free meal sites

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) also offers a summer nutrition program for kids called SUN. This program has two main components:

- [SUN Bucks](#) – An income-based summer food support program in which most eligible school-age children are automatically enrolled. The website includes steps to take if you believe a child is eligible but is not enrolled in the program.
- [SUN Meals and SUN Meals To-Go](#) – A no-cost summer food service for kids of all ages. The web page should be updated soon with information for summer 2026. Encourage members to keep an eye out.
 - SUN Meals are offered at schools, parks, and other locations. Search “Eat On-Site” to find community locations offering free meals and snacks.
 - SUN Meals To-Go provides pickup and delivery in some rural communities where it may be difficult to access SUN Meals. Search “Meals To-Go” to find pick-up locations in communities where this program is offered.

Please remind members that SNAP/EBT can be used at many farmers markets. In addition, please make sure members know that **Ruby’s Pantry ceased operations** effective April 1, 2026.

If you work with a member who could use help meeting needs related to social determinants of health (SDOH) such as food insecurity, please consider referring them to our Community Health Worker (CHW) program. CHWs provide in-person support, connect members to local resources, and help them navigate ever-changing needs and resources. You can make a referral using the [PrimeWest Health Community Health Worker \(CHW\) Referral Form](#). A list of counties served by CHWs starts at the [end of this page](#). 

PrimeWellness: Support for Members to Improve Their Health

Leah Anderson, Population Health Manager

PrimeWest Health is excited to introduce PrimeWellness, a new health and wellness program designed to help members feel their best! This program is offered at no cost to members age 18 or over who want to make healthy changes and feel better.

Program details

PrimeWellness focuses on helping members improve their physical and mental health in ways that matter most to them. When members join the program, they choose the goals they want to work toward, and PrimeWest Health helps them reach those goals. Members get phone support from a nurse who provides personalized education, coaching, and support. Example areas of focus include increasing physical activity, making dietary changes, improving sleep, and finding ways to manage stress.

PrimeWest Health primarily conducts outreach to members who have declined county case management to find out if they are interested in joining PrimeWellness; however, all members are welcome to participate in the program. If a member with a county case manager is interested in joining PrimeWellness, PrimeWest Health will coordinate with the county case manager to align our efforts to best support the member’s needs.

Member referrals

If you would like to refer a member to PrimeWellness, please call Member Services at **1-866-431-0801** (toll free) and ask to speak to the LPN Community Health Specialist, or send an email to caremanagement@primewest.org. We look forward to partnering with you to best serve our members! 

PrimeWest Health Community Health Workers

Natasha Jevnager, RN, Special Needs Plan Care Coordinator

[PrimeWest Health Community Health Workers \(CHWs\)](#) are available to help make sure members’ health and social needs are met, allowing them to achieve the best possible outcomes. CHWs are currently available in Big

Stone, Chippewa, Douglas, Grant, Kandiyohi, Lac qui Parle, Pope, Renville, Stevens, Swift, Traverse, and Yellow Medicine counties.

If you work with a member who could benefit from working with a PrimeWest Health CHW, please complete the [*PrimeWest Health Community Health Worker \(CHW\) Referral Form*](#). 

Clinical Care: Practice Guidelines

Christi Matt, RN, CCP, Manager of Families and Children Care Management

To ensure quality of care for our members, PrimeWest Health has adopted preventive and chronic disease practice guidelines appropriate for preconception, prenatal, and postpartum care; children; adolescents; young adults; and adults. The guidelines are approved by PrimeWest Health's Quality and Care Coordination Committee (QCCC) and Joint Powers Board (JPB), reviewed annually, and updated as appropriate. In addition, PrimeWest Health follows National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) specifications for certain areas.

PrimeWest Health-adopted clinical practice guidelines and their official sources are available on [our website](#). We encourage all providers to review these guidelines.

For more information, please contact:

Christi Matt, Manager of Families and Children Care Management

1-320-335-5368

christi.matt@primewest.org 

Reporting Suspected Maltreatment of Children and Vulnerable Adults

Christi Matt, RN, CCP, Manager of Families and Children Care Management

Minnesota Statute requires mandated reporters, including county case managers, to report all instances of suspected maltreatment of children and vulnerable adults. The following includes information on reporting as well as links to helpful resources and training.

Children

[MN Stat. sec. 260E.06, subd. 1](#) states that a mandatory reporter:

...who knows or has reason to believe a child is being maltreated...shall immediately report the information to the local welfare agency, agency responsible for assessing or investigating the report, police department, county sheriff, tribal social services agency, or tribal police department....

You can find the following resources on the Minnesota Department of Human Services' (DHS) website:

- [Mandated reporter resources](#)
- A link to free, web-based training for mandated reporters through the [Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy \(MNCWTA\)](#)

In addition, [information on child protection policies and programs](#) can be found on the website of the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

Vulnerable adults

[MN Stat. sec. 626.557, subd. 3](#) states that:

A mandated reporter who has reason to believe that a vulnerable adult is being or has been maltreated, or who has knowledge that a vulnerable adult has sustained a physical injury which is not reasonably explained shall immediately report the information to the common entry point.

The Minnesota Adult Abuse Reporting Center (MAARC) has been designated by DHS to be the single, statewide common entry point (CEP) for accepting reports of suspected maltreatment of vulnerable adults.

The DHS [Vulnerable Adult Protection and Elder Abuse web page](#) includes information about how to report abuse, who is considered a mandated reporter, and definitions of vulnerable adult and maltreatment. Mandated reporters can also take a [free, web-based training on reporting maltreatment of vulnerable](#) adults through DHS. 

Important Dates

County case management supervisor meetings

Meetings are held **quarterly** on the third Thursday of the month, from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., at PrimeWest Health in Alexandria, unless otherwise noted. Remote participation via Microsoft Teams is also available. Lunch is provided for in-person attendees. Supervisors will receive an email containing the agenda along with a meeting link the week of the meeting. Upcoming meeting dates:

- July 16, 2026
- October 15, 2026

County case manager meetings

Meetings are held **monthly** on the fourth Thursday of the month, from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., via Microsoft Teams. County case managers will receive an email containing the agenda along with a meeting link the week of the meeting. Upcoming meeting dates:

- May 28, 2026
- June 25, 2026
- July 23, 2026

New county case manager training

Meetings are held in February, May, August, and November at PrimeWest Health in Alexandria, unless otherwise noted. A light breakfast and lunch are provided for attendees. The target audience of this training is new county case managers; however, all county case managers who would like a refresher or who may be working with PrimeWest Health members in the future are welcome to attend.

Please work with your supervisor if you need or want to attend a training; they are provided with training dates and times the month prior. For any additional questions, please reach out to us at caremanagement@primewest.org.

Contact Information

Care Management is here to support you! Have a question? Please email us at caremanagement@primewest.org.

You can find current and past issues of **PrimePartners** at www.primewest.org/primepartners.

