



CONSORTIUM CONNECTION

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National Medication Shortages

“Drug shortages have reached record levels, hitting a new peak of 323 medicines in the U.S. for which demand has exceeded supply during the first 3 months of 2024” (Source: [National Drug Shortages Hit Record Levels](#)).



The shortages extend beyond injectable weight loss medications and includes a number of antibiotics, heart medications, injectable chemotherapy drugs, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder medications. The FDA, Food & Drug Administration, maintains a list of drug shortages where you can search for your medications to see if they are on the list found here:

<https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/drugshortages/default.cfm>

My pharmacy cannot fill my medication, what next?

Find Another Pharmacy

- You can call a variety of local pharmacies to see if they can order the medication. Not all pharmacies use the same suppliers.
 - Or you can call Excellus to assist in finding a pharmacy who carries the medication and is in network, 1-877-253-4797
- Always check the new pharmacy is in network with Excellus by looking them up: <https://www.excellusbcbs.com/find-a-doctor/pharmacy>.
- The new pharmacy can call your previous pharmacy to transfer the prescription which can save you time having to obtain a new prescription.
- Mail Order Pharmacies Options: Express Scripts, 1-855-315-5220, and Wegman’s Home Delivery, 1-800-586-6910.

Alternative Medications

- Discuss with your provider about alternate medications that you can obtain on a regular basis.

Wellframe: Care Management

Wellframe is a mobile app for your smartphone or tablet that connects you to your Excellus BlueCross BlueShield Member Care Management team.

Wellframe turns your care manager’s instructions into an easy health checklist. With Wellframe, you’ll know what to do each day, and your care team will be there to help along the way. From everyday questions to long-term guidance through complex medical conditions, the Excellus BlueCross BlueShield Member Care Management team is here to lend a hand.

Need help keeping track of prescription refills? No problem. Need to find a support group or information about a diagnosis? They know just where to look. They can even help you learn how to better care for a family member. Just reach out; they are there for you.



You can chat with your Care Team, including a nurse care manager, who can answer medical questions about your health conditions or help you manage your medications.

Your Excellus Health Advocate, helps you stay on track with your health goals by providing support and encouragement whenever you need it.

Visit www.wellframe.com/download on your device. Your access code is : EXCELLUS

The Benefits of Biosimilars

What is a biosimilar medication?

A biosimilar medication, is a medicine that is very close in structure and function to a biologic medicine. A biologic drug is made from a living system, such as yeast, bacteria, or animal cells.

Are biosimilars the same as generic drugs?

A generic drug is an exact copy of a brand name drug. A biosimilar is a little like a generic version of a biologic drug, but there are important differences. A biosimilar is not an exact copy of its brand name drug. "A biosimilar is made from a biologic (natural) source, while a generic drug is made from chemicals" (Source: American Cancer Society, "What Are Biosimilar Drugs?") Once approved, a biosimilar needs to have special approval to be considered interchangeable with its brand name biologic, while a generic can be automatically substituted for its brand name drug.

"Biosimilars are safe and effective treatment options for many illnesses such as chronic skin and bowel diseases, arthritis, kidney conditions, and cancer. Biosimilars increase access to lifesaving medications at potentially lower costs" (Source: U.S. Food & Drug Administration, "Biosimilars".)

There have been ten biosimilars for Humira[®] launched since 2023 such as Hadlima[®] and Cyltezo[®] which have interchangeability with the name brand. As with all treatment decisions, you should talk to your healthcare providers and check other trusted sources of information to learn more about biosimilar treatment options.



CANARX

Greater Tampa Bay County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium

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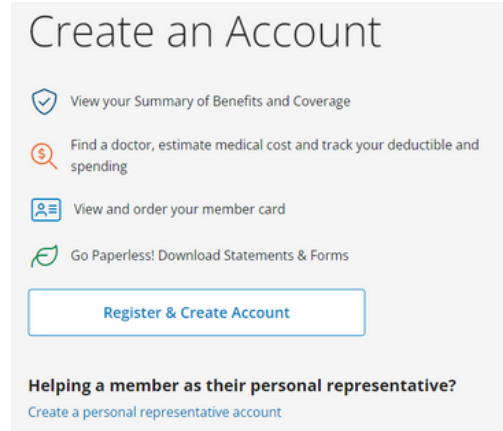
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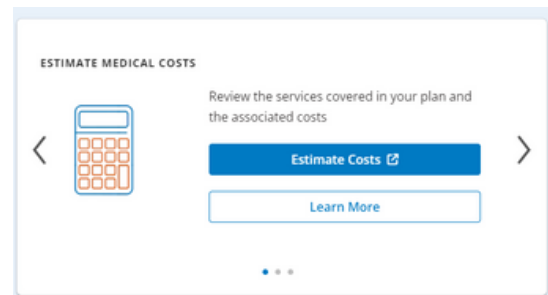
SIMPLE. SAFE. SMART.

Excellus Cost Comparison Tool

Do you have an upcoming procedure and wondering how much it will cost? Excellus has built into their website a cost comparison tool. You must first create an Excellus online account so the pricing is adapted to the plan you are currently enrolled in. Go to www.excellusbcbs.com and click Register on the right.



Once in your account scroll to the bottom to the Estimate Medical Costs area.



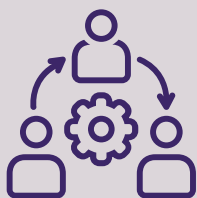
You can then click Estimate Costs and search for procedures. The search results will show your out of pocket costs for in-network providers in your area. This is a great way to plan ahead for out of pocket expenses but to also learn about in-network specialists and providers in your area.

If you are looking for a telephonic resource you can always call Excellus Customer Service, 1-877-253-4797 to be quoted benefits and estimated out of pocket costs. The most accurate cost estimates come from knowing exact procedure codes. In addition, coverage is diagnosis driven, meaning certain procedures and medical services are covered depending on the diagnosis submitted with the claim.



Labor Lens

Our Governance: Municipalities and Labor Working Together

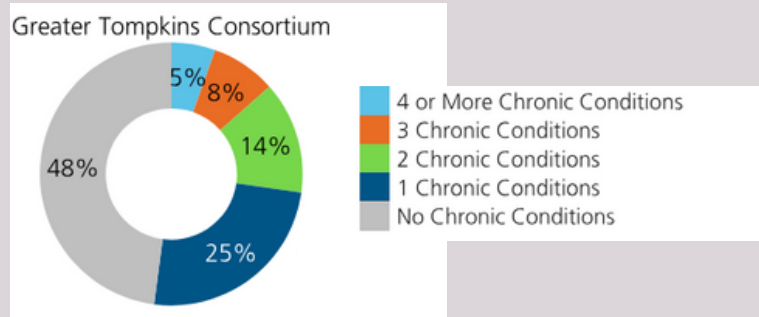


During the May 2nd Joint Committee on Plan Structure and Design meeting a 2023 Utilization Review was given to discuss the increase in medication and prescription claims.

According to the Excellus report on medical claims overall plan costs have increased ten percent per member per month. Outpatient and Professional Arenas are eighty-one percent of medical spend.

ProAct reported an additional 13,000 increase in prescription counts for 2023, with a total cost of prescriptions reaching \$22,862,694 in 2023, which is \$4 million more than 2022 claims. Not only was there an increase in the number of the prescriptions, but the overall cost of medications.

Annual utilization reviews provide the Consortium insights into claims spending, but also where to focus our wellness program outreach. The most prevalent chronic conditions across all our membership was found to be cholesterol disorders, depression and anxiety, hypertension, diabetes, and asthma.



As an Excellus member, you have access to REACH Kidney Care, an independent company that offers kidney disease management support. There is no out-of-pocket program costs for qualifying members. Individuals may enroll or disenroll at any time.

How REACH works:

- **Care Management Services-** A care manager will teach you one-on-one about kidney disease. They also explain your doctor's prescribed care plan and work with you to help you meet your life goals. The care managers are registered nurses.
- **Dietary and Social Support-** A registered dietitian will help you explore kidney-friendly foods. A social worker will also connect you with available community resources.
- **Medication Review-** REACH pharmacists will review your medicines. They will contact your doctor with any issues.
- **Guided Care Transitions-** Your care manager and health team will help you transition to your choice of care if your needs change.



You can learn more about the program by visiting, www.REACHKidneyCare.org or calling 1-833-447-4397. REACH is available to help you manage your kidney disease.

REACH Kidney Care has been a lifesaver for me. They have given me hope. -- Shirley Tyus

March Food Drive Success



The March Food Drive was a big success with multiple municipal members serving as drop off sites. Participants include Tompkins County, Towns of Ithaca, Dryden, and Homer, Villages of Cayuga Heights, Dryden, and Owego, Lansing Library, and City of Cortland.

Town of Ithaca donated to the Lansing Food Pantry with donations weighing 68.5 pounds!



Town of Ithaca

Town of Dryden made donations to Dryden Food Pantry, Freeville Food Pantry, and the Mutual Aid Cabinet in Varna.



Town of Dryden



Village of Owego

Village of Owego donations were given to Tioga County Rural Ministry. GTCMHIC donations went to the Moravia Hope Pantry.

Wellness

Wellness is the preventive health care that promotes health and prevents disease.



SNAP-Ed
New York
SAVE TIME. SAVE MONEY. EAT HEALTHY.
SOUTHERN FINGER LAKES REGION

Champions of Change

July 15th @ 12:00 PM

The Consortium is hosting, in partnership with SNAP-Ed: Southern Finger Lakes Region, a Champions of Change nutrition education virtual class.

- Discover how SNAP-Ed addresses food insecurity, hunger, and improves nutrition with SNAP populations in your community.
- Learn about becoming a role model and Champion of Change to promote health and prevent food insecurity in your community.
- Learn to Eat Healthy on a Budget with the SNAP-Ed Tompkins County Nutrition Educator.

Email Katie Weigle at knw38@cornell.edu or call (607) 664-2303 for more information about this FREE class!

SNAP-Ed is funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP. This Institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Healthy Eating Habits

#1: Ditch the Fast Food

- Bring your lunch from home.
- Cook extra food on the weekend to make weekday meals fast and easy.
- Keep a well-stocked pantry and freezer.



#2: Nature's Fast Food

Eat five servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Incorporate at least one fruit or vegetable with your breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Don't make vegetables an afterthought.



#3: Eating Mindfully

Mindful eating leads to better eating habits.

- Turn off the TV and your phone.
- Don't eat in your car or at your desk.
- Create some atmosphere with flowers, lighting or nice linens.

Making the Most of Your Health Plan



Care Management
with Wellframe®

The virtual classes will be hosted by Excellus and the Consortium. Each class provides the same information.

Attend this live webinar to learn all about the tools and resources you have as an Excellus member including telemedicine, prescription benefit tools, well-being deals and discounts, preventive screenings, and more!

Email: hcwellness@tompkins-co.org to be sent the class link

When: July 9th 9:00 AM
July 18th 12:00 PM



Telemedicine



Benefits



Find a Doctor

Upcoming Open Meetings

Meetings are being held in-person or virtually. If you are interested in attending a meeting, contact

consortium@tompkins-co.org.

Operations Committee

June 6 (1:30pm)

Executive Committee

June 12 (3:30pm)

Finance Committee

July 9 (3:30pm)

The Consortium Connection

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