

From: Mayor
Sent: Friday, April 17, 2020 4:33 PM
To: Mayor
Subject: COVID-19 Update: A Message from the Mayor on Medical Benefits



A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Marlene Feist".

The City of Spokane

COVID-19 News Update for April 17

Information about Coronavirus Disease 19 (COVID-19) is evolving rapidly. We want to make sure our City employees have up-to-date information. We will provide this update, as needed, to communicate what you need to know, while we work to reduce the spread of this disease in our community and continue to provide critical public services.

A Message from the Mayor

Our employees have been doing great work during these unprecedented times. While we can't relieve all of the uncertainty and worry that has entered our lives, we can lessen one worry—the possibility of unexpected medical bills related to COVID-19.

To ease a possible financial burden, the City has directed Kaiser Permanente and Premera Blue Cross to extend the time period when employee cost shares will be waived for COVID-19 testing and treatments through Oct. 1, 2020.

That means qualified and enrolled City of Spokane Employees and their Dependents wouldn't have to pay copayments, deductibles, and coinsurance for all in-network COVID-19 testing and treatment (both inpatient and outpatient) through Oct. 1. Our insurance already is waiving cost shares for testing and related provider visits through June 30 but will now extend that waiver to align with the dates of this benefit expansion.

Additionally, Premera Blue Cross will review claims retroactively back to January 1, 2020, and reprocess any claims with COVID-19-related treatments or tests. If you have any Kaiser Permanente COVID-19 claims for health care services that date back to January 1, 2020, please ask your provider to re-bill Kaiser Permanente and the claim(s) will be reprocessed to waive your cost share.

If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to Employee Benefits at 625-6565, Kaiser Permanente Member Relations at 1-888-901-4636 or Premera Blue Cross Customer Service 1-800-722-1471.

I am hopeful that this will help you and your family plan for the months ahead. Please enjoy the beautiful weather this weekend—while keeping a safe 6-foot distance from others!

Extended School Closures

Thanks to all the employees who responded to the survey on the impacts of school closure being extended through the end of the school year in June. Employees have individualized needs around this issue. Employees are encouraged to notify their supervisor or HR Analyst if they would like to explore accommodations to support their work-life balance while kids are out of school/child care.

The City is supporting a number of flexible working arrangements to allow employees to be productive, and reduce the need for using accrued leave. We encourage employees to be creative and to communicate ideas or concerns to their supervisor or HR so that we can collaboratively work toward effective solutions.

And for all those parents who are homeschooling, take a [look at this information put together by our Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#).

Flexible Spending Accounts – Changes

On March 27, 2020, the President signed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act of 2020 (“CARES Act”) to provide a broad economic stimulus and coronavirus (COVID-19) relief for Americans. The Act includes some changes to Medical Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs).

Medical Flexible Spending Accounts New Eligible Expenses

Retroactive to Jan. 1, 2020 the CARES Act expanded the [list of eligible expenses](#):

- Over-the-Counter (OTC) drugs/medicines – The CARES Act reinstates eligible OTC items as eligible expenses for reimbursement. This includes items like Advil, Tylenol, cough medicines, allergy medicine and much more!
- Feminine products – the CARES Act also includes expenses for “menstrual care products.” The law specifies these items include tampons, pads, liners, cups, sponges, or similar products used by consumers with respect to menstruation.

Operational Changes

Service providers are working quickly to update the list of eligible expenses to include these items. First the eligible lists need to be updated, and then the retail stores and pharmacies must update this information in their computer systems. Stores vary on how often they update their eligible expense items; some monthly, quarterly or annually.

Until the stores have updated their eligible expense lists, benefit debit cards will not approve these types of expenses. However, Medical Flexible Spending Account participants can submit manual claims with appropriate itemized documentation dated Jan. 1, 2020, and prospectively via consumer portal, mobile application, email, mail, fax, or in-person. The itemized documentation should clearly specify the items that were purchased for the expense to be eligible for reimbursement.

Our Third Party Administrator, Rehn & Associates, is working with their software and card vendor to ensure a seamless transition for our employees. [Attached is an updated non all-inclusive list of eligible expenses.](#)

If you have any questions, please reach out to Rehn & Associates at 534-0600.

An Educational Opportunity Around Earth Day

With schools closed, many of our employees are looking for additional educational opportunities, especially for older students.

The City's Water Conservation Coordinator and Solid Waste/Recycling Educator have teamed up to create a virtual workshop series to celebrate the 50th Earth Day from home. Workshops are set for 10 to 11 a.m. each weekday next week.

You have to download WebEx and register in advance for each session. [Here is the information on how to get involved.](#)

Employee Information Portal (<https://covid19.spokanecity.org/>)

Remember, this Employee Information Portal is a great resource for employees to stay current on what's happening with the COVID-19 response. The [Employee Information Portal](#) can be accessed from work or home, using a computer or mobile device. All of the emailed information we have sent to employees is archived here.



