

It's *Your* Benefit

Health insurance and other benefit programs for state and local employees and retirees



Important Information for Medicare Participants in the Group Insurance Program

Almost 25,000 individuals on Medicare are enrolled in our health insurance program covering state and local retirees. Many are aware that enrollment for prescription drug benefits through Medicare Part D begins in mid-November; coverage is scheduled to begin January 1, 2006. Beyond that, there are many unanswered questions, so we strongly urge that you not take any action until we can advise you on how to proceed.

As of *It's Your Benefit* printing deadlines, the federal government's Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the agency responsible for development of Part D, had not provided sufficient guidance to allow the Group Insurance Board to make a decision on which approach (out of several) would work best for the program. Our goals are to obtain the greatest reimbursement from Medicare, which will allow us to lower our premium rates while minimizing participants' confusion about enrollment and benefits.

We plan to provide further information in late

summer or early fall. We will communicate through *It's your Benefit*, special mailings to annuitants, the *It's Your Choice* booklet (available during Dual-Choice enrollment in October) and through our Internet site at <http://etf.wi.gov>.

Medicare participants: It is extremely important that you wait until you have guidance from the Department of Employee Trust Funds before taking any steps to enroll for Medicare coverage.

Please note:

- Medicare will begin enrolling certain low-income participants automatically and will notify these participants in early- to mid-summer.
- Though some have asked, we are not aware of a July 1 enrollment deadline for annuitants. There are some July 1 business deadlines for plan administrators, but these do not relate to participant enrollment. If we learn otherwise, we will notify those affected.

We thank you for your patience and understanding while we work to incorporate this new initiative and communicate how it affects everyone in the program.

Tablet Splitting Reduces Overall Cost of Buying Certain Medications

As the overall cost of health insurance continues to rise, the staff at the Department of Employee Trust Funds continually look for ways to keep costs down and provide quality, affordable health care for all members. One way to maintain quality and reduce the cost of prescription drugs is to use higher strength tablets and split them in half. It's called "tablet splitting." Many members are already saving money — up to 50% on their monthly copayments — by taking advantage of the Tablet Splitting Program, developed by Navitus Health Solutions, our pharmacy benefit manager.

The medications included in the Navitus Tablet Splitting Program are listed below:

- **Aceon, Benicar, Cozaar, Diovan** – These medications are mainly used to treat high blood pressure.
- **Crestor, Zocor** – These medications are used to treat high cholesterol.
- **Arava** – This medication is used to treat arthritis.
- **Aricept** – This medication is used to treat Alzheimer's Disease.
- **Lexapro, Zoloft** – These medications are used to treat depression and other behavioral health conditions.

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Wisconsin
Department of
Employee Trust Funds

P.O. Box 7931
Madison, WI
53707-7931

1-877-533-5020
(608) 266-3285

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Did You Know?

- Smoking increases your risk for developing blood clots and heart disease that can result in a heart attack, heart failure or stroke. Smoking causes your arteries to thicken and your blood vessels to narrow. Fat and plaque stick to the walls of your arteries, which makes it harder for blood to flow. Reduced blood flow to your heart may result in chest pain, high blood pressure, and an increased heart rate. Smoking is also linked to lung disease and cancer and can cause premature death.¹
- Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death and disease in our nation.²
- More than one million people continue to smoke cigarettes in Wisconsin, including an estimated 136,000 young people.³
- With nearly 16% of all deaths in 2000 attributed to cigarette smoking, and \$1.6 billion paid in direct health care costs, most Wisconsin residents are or will be affected by cigarette smoking.³
- **Did you know you have a provision under Uniform Benefits that can help you quit smoking?** Coverage includes pharmacological products that require a written prescription and one office visit for counseling and to obtain the prescription. Check with your health plan to see what medication thera-

pies, materials, advice, counseling, classes, and other resources are available to help you set that quit date and live tobacco free.

Additional resources:

The Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line, 1-800-270-STOP (7867) provides free phone counseling for all Wisconsin residents who want to quit using tobacco.

Internet sites:

The Wisconsin Tobacco Control Board
<http://www.hadenoughwisconsin.com>

The Tobacco Control Resource Center for Wisconsin
<http://www.tobwis.org>



¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

² U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

³ *The Burden of Tobacco in Wisconsin*, a 2002 report of the Wisconsin Division of Public Health, the University of Wisconsin Comprehensive Cancer Center, the American Cancer Society, and the Wisconsin Tobacco Control Board.

Important Member Service Satisfaction Survey Underway



Each year, more than 6,000 state employees and retirees covered under the health insurance program complete the Consumer Assessment of Health Plans Survey (CAHPS) telephone interview about the health insurance benefits they received over the past year. The Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) publishes the survey results in a “report card” format. You will find it each year in section E of the *It's Your Choice* booklet.

The report card is a unique tool designed to help subscribers make a health plan selection. The participating health plans also use the survey results to identify areas for improvement. For example, a health plan that received a low rating in customer service recently conducted its own mail survey focusing on customer service. The goal was to find out exactly what changes were needed to improve participant satisfaction.

Please note that the CAHPS survey interviews take place each year during the months of April, May and June. ETF would like to thank employees and retirees that participate in this very important study.

BadgerRx Gold and the Group Health Insurance Program

BADGERRx^{gold} program

What is the connection between the new BadgerRx Gold program and the State of Wisconsin Group Health Insurance Program? You may have seen recent media coverage about a prescription drug program administered by Navitus Health Solutions, our Pharmacy Benefit Manager (PBM). The new program, called BadgerRx Gold, makes prescription medications more affordable to people in Wisconsin who are **uninsured or underinsured**. It is a public-private partnership between the State of Wisconsin and Navitus.

Participants covered under the state's group health insurance programs already participate in BadgerRx, which is included in their health insurance coverage. The new BadgerRx Gold plan is a separate plan, but takes advantage of the combined purchasing power of the state employee plan to offer better prices on certain prescription drugs to any state resident who:

- does not have insurance coverage; or
- has insurance but does not have a prescription drug benefit; or
- is in a health plan with high coinsurance; or
- is in a health plan that does not cover the medications they need.

There is no age requirement and no screening for pre-existing conditions. To date, almost 3,500 state residents have enrolled in the program, which offers savings up to 25-40% on the cost of certain brand name formulary medications and from 50-75% on certain generic formulary drugs. Estimates show that approximately 1.1 million people in Wisconsin do not have adequate insurance coverage for outpatient prescription drugs.

How did BadgerRx Gold develop? In an effort to get at the rising cost of prescription drugs, the state's Group Insurance Board last year carved out pharmacy benefits from its participating health plans in favor of one common PBM. The Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) and the selected PBM, Navitus, leveraged the purchasing power of our approximately 240,000 health insurance members to design a new approach to pharmacy benefit management. This new approach included implementing a three level co-pay structure and successfully negotiating the prices of a cost-effective formulary (or list of preferred drugs) with the pharmaceutical

industry.

The purchasing power of this partnership saved our program more than \$25 million in prescription drug costs in its first year, which helped partially contain health insurance premium costs.

Anticipating the success of this innovative approach, Governor Doyle's 2003-2005 biennial budget extended the model beyond state employees. The new program, now called BadgerRx, has allowed other Wisconsin-based employers to partner with the state to obtain excellent prices on their prescription drugs. The final step of this initiative was creating the new BadgerRx Gold program to extend this purchasing power to any state resident.

Are people who enroll in BadgerRx in the same "pool" as participants covered under the group health insurance program? No. The groups are not "pooled" in the insurance sense, but they are combined for purchasing purposes, more like a buyers club arrangement. Combining the purchasing power of the programs will lead to even better discounts and rebates with the pharmaceutical companies.

How can people find out more about the program?

Wisconsin residents who are interested in learning more may contact Navitus Health Solutions at (866) 809-9382, or visit them online at www.badgerrxgold.com. Navitus is responsible for all operational aspects of the program.

Dual-Choice Enrollment Period Set for October 10-28

The Group Insurance Board set the 2006 Dual-Choice enrollment period for October 10-28, 2005. During this period, **currently insured** participants may switch from one health plan to another plan and/or from single to family coverage without restrictions. All Dual-Choice coverage changes are effective January 1, 2006. For news and information regarding specific health insurance program changes, check the September issue of *It's Your Benefit* and review the *It's Your Choice* booklet, available in mid- to late-September. You may also monitor our Internet site at <http://etf.wi.gov>.

Tablet splitting, continued from page 1

To take advantage of this cost savings opportunity, contact your physician or health care provider's office to determine if tablet splitting is appropriate for your situation. Your health care provider can then phone a new prescription order into your pharmacy, and you can begin saving up to 50% on your monthly copayments!

The accompanying table illustrates how tablet splitting allows you to receive the same dose of a

medication in a fewer number of tablets. Thus, the overall cost of the medication is reduced.

How are medications chosen for the Tablet Splitting program? Drugs included in this program are based on the following criteria:

- The drug product is on the formulary.
- The drug product is recognized as an appropriate product to split by the Navitus Pharmacy & Therapeutics Committee.
- The drug is flat priced (i.e. various strengths of the medication must be comparably priced).
- The medication must have once-daily dosing.

How do I obtain a tablet-splitting device?

Members can obtain one free of charge by calling Navitus Customer Service toll free at 1-866-333-2757. Allow one week for delivery.

	Product and Strength	Quantity	Member Co-pay	Member Annual Savings
Without Pill Splitting	Drug A 40 mg tablets	30	\$15.00	\$0.00
With Pill Splitting	Drug A 80 mg tablets	15	\$7.50	\$90.00

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Department Secretary
Deputy Secretary
Editor

Eric Stanchfield
David Stella
Nancy Ketterhagen

Department of Employee Trust Funds
PO Box 7931
Madison, WI 53707-7931