



Empowering women to take control of their health

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As women, we work hard to harmonize our careers and our personal lives. We face many challenges along the way that often means putting ourselves and our own needs on the back burner, particularly when it comes to our own health. When we think about taking some time for self-love and self-care, we may think of taking some time to read a good book, or listen to our favorite music, or simply enjoy the quiet. But self-love and self-care also means taking the time to make sure to safeguard our physical and mental health by getting the care and treatment we need.

The Department of Labor helps women address their health needs and the challenges that impact accessing care for their health. We're working to increase awareness of protections related to health benefits, maternity care, paid family leave access, pregnancy discrimination, access to mental health and substance use benefits and more. At our Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA), we want you to get the health benefits you are entitled to from your job-based health plan with knowledge of the protections available for these benefits. This is key to taking control of your health for a longer, stronger and happier life for you and your loved ones. Get started with these tips:

- 1. Learn about health protections for women.** We administer laws that provide important protections for women's health throughout their lives. For example, if you or someone you know is pregnant or recently had a baby and is breastfeeding, [there are important protections to help you avoid discrimination at work and pump when you need to](#). There are also protections for coverage under your job-based health plan for well-woman visits, screening for diabetes pre- and post-pregnancy, and breastfeeding services and supplies. Or if you or someone you know is battling breast cancer, the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998 provides [rights for health coverage related to mastectomies and reconstructive surgery](#).
- 2. Review how your health plan works.** You need to know what your health plan covers and how much services will cost. The first step is requesting a copy of your health plan's Summary Plan Description or Summary of Benefits and Coverage. Ask your health plan administrator, human resources or benefits

department at work for a copy and then review it so you are prepared to make informed decisions when needed.

3. **Don't skip or delay recommended health screenings!** For your job-based health coverage, the Affordable Care Act provides access to preventive services like screenings for cancer (such as mammograms and pap tests), urinary incontinence, diabetes and interpersonal and domestic violence with no out-of-pocket cost, as well as critical health benefits such as maternity and newborn care and general well woman care. This ensures you can access these important screenings without financial barriers and receive comprehensive services at all stages of life. You're also entitled to coverage for blood pressure checks, cholesterol screenings, some forms of nutritional counseling, obesity counseling, diabetes tests, help quitting smoking, lactation support, intervention and counseling for interpersonal and domestic violence, and contraception and family planning services and other services.
4. **Use your mental health benefits.** You should not face greater barriers to get mental health or substance use disorder treatment than if seeking medical or surgical treatment. For more information, [read our publication, "Understanding Your Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Benefits."](#)
5. **Get help.** If you have additional questions, we have benefits advisors across the country who can help – for free. Contacting us is easy – you can [reach us online at askebsa.dol.gov](#) or by calling 1-866-444-3272 (EBSA). Assistance is available in over 105 languages.

You also can join EBSA and the department's Wage and Hour Division and Women's Bureau for a collaborative webinar on Aug. 15 from 2:00-3:30 p.m. ET to learn more about protections and resources to help you care for yourself and your family. This webinar will address the unique health challenges faced by women at different stages of their careers, focusing on early career, mid-career, and near retirement. Please [REGISTER for the webinar](#) and get empowered to take control of your health. And share the invite with other women! In the words of Lucille Ball, "love yourself first and everything else falls into line."

Lisa M. Gomez is the assistant secretary of the Employee Benefits Security Administration.

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