

# The Use of Information Technology in Health Care

## *Progress is Coming... Slowly, but Surely*

### Did You Know?

Did you know that the use of information technology (IT) can improve the quality of healthcare, lower health costs and reduce medical mistakes? Despite these

benefits, the spread of technology in healthcare has been slow. While many hospitals and physician practices recognize the value of IT, challenges such as cost and a lack of standards are hindering progress.

The pace is likely to quicken as more providers see improvements in patient care, patients demand better technology and insurers and purchasers recognize the value of investing in IT.

## Assess your health risks securely online

Have you registered for the State of Health online? All PEBB members have access to [www.wellmed.com/stateofhealth](http://www.wellmed.com/stateofhealth), a suite of secure, password-protected health tools that includes a health risk assessment – a very important first step in taking charge of your health. In just 15 minutes, you can know your overall health status and risks, and steps you can take to improve your health.

To ensure even greater online security of your personal information, you no longer have to use your Social Security number to register for the State of Health online. Instead, you use your PEBB Benefit Number. The benefit confirmation statement you received in March lists your Benefit Number, along with Benefit Numbers for your dependents.

When you register with your Benefit Number, you create a password that only you know. Unless you share

your password with someone, you are the only one with access to your online information. You can even check the status of access to your information by clicking on “History.” It will show an access audit trail.

Multiple firewalls protect the servers that contain your information. If you opt-in to receive e-mails, they are encrypted by Secure Socket Layers – the most secure transmission technology.

The servers store identical information at two separate locations, which ensures against natural disasters. Both sites maintain physical security through pass-code authority and pass-code locked-door access.

Neither PEBB nor your employer will ever have access to your personal information through the State of Health online. And you may request that the site remove your information at any time.

### Why technology?

Quality healthcare depends on good information – whether it’s from the patient, between providers, from a lab or in a medical manual. The use of IT can improve the management of information throughout the healthcare system.

Providers can access information instantly through electronic medical records and personal digital assistants (PDAs). And patients can become more informed decision makers by using

*(continued on page 5)*

## *Inside this issue*

World No-tobacco Day .....	2
May Is National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month .....	2
A Guide To Your ID Numbers .....	3
Medical Carrier Online Services .....	4
Pill-Splitting Options .....	4
Health Center .....	6

## May 31: World No-tobacco Day

The World Health Organization has proclaimed May 31 as World No-tobacco Day. But you don't have to wait for World No-Tobacco Day to be tobacco free.

Learn how the Free & Clear<sup>®</sup> Tobacco Treatment Program can provide the tools, including free nicotine patches or gum and a recommendation on prescription medication (when appropriate), to help you or your loved ones become free of tobacco.

Call and tell them you're a PEBB member to access this covered benefit. They'll help you create your own tobacco-free world.



English: (877) 270-7867

Spanish: (877) 266-3863

TTY: (877) 777-6534

Or, go to [www.freeclear.com/](http://www.freeclear.com/) PEBB to register online.

## May is National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month

Every day, about five percent of PEBB members – almost 2,000 children and adults – deal with the tricky condition of asthma. There's no cure for asthma, which is often a lifetime illness that can cause hospitalization and even death. But, working with their healthcare provider, PEBB members with asthma can learn to manage it and reduce its burden on their lives.

In May, the Oregon Asthma Network will release a series of easy-to-read-and-use flyers in a series called "Helping You Keep Your Asthma under Control." They're designed to help your healthcare providers educate their asthma patients on self-care.

One of the flyers focuses on triggers – things that can cause asthma attacks. Among them are

smoke, dust mites, strong smells, mold and pollen. Being physically active and breathing cold air can also act as triggers.

But a trigger for one person with asthma may not faze another. So it's up to asthma patients to act like detectives – noting what they're doing and what's around them when they have an attack – and sharing that information with their provider. Together, they can decide what triggers to avoid and how to avoid them.

Another flyer talks about the two types of medicines those with asthma need – control medicine to help them avoid attacks and rescue medicine for when they do have an attack.

*(Continued on page 3)*

### PEBB Resources

Access PEBB, insurance companies and other benefit resources using the contact information below. The insurance company Web sites include provider directories. You can also link to insurance company Web sites from the PEBB Web site.

#### PEBB

Phone: (503) 373-1102, (800) 788-0520

Fax: (503) 373-1654

Web: [oregon.gov/DAS/PEBB](http://oregon.gov/DAS/PEBB)

E-mail: [inquiries.pebb@state.or.us](mailto:inquiries.pebb@state.or.us)

#### PEBB Health Center

Phone: (503) 362-1111, (800) 701-1333

Web: [www.pebbhealth.org](http://www.pebbhealth.org)

#### BenefitHelp Solutions

(Healthcare and Dependent Care FSAs)

Phone: (800) 556-2230

Web site: [www.bestchoiceadmin.com](http://www.bestchoiceadmin.com)

#### Kaiser Permanente

(HMO & Dental Plans)

Phone: (503) 813-2000, (800) 813-2000

Web site: [my.kp.org/nw/pebb](http://my.kp.org/nw/pebb)

#### The ODS Companies

(Dental Plans)

Phone: (800) 452-1058

Web site: [www.odscompanies.com/pebb](http://www.odscompanies.com/pebb)

#### Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon

(PPO Plans)

Phone: (800) 826-9813 (outside Portland);

(503) 220-3849 (Portland)

Web site: [www.or.regence.com/pebb](http://www.or.regence.com/pebb)

#### The Standard Insurance Company

(Life and Disability Plans)

Phone: (800) 842-1707;

Disability (800) 242-1888

Web site: [www.standard.com](http://www.standard.com)

#### UnumProvident

(Long-Term Care Plan)

Phone: (800) 227-4165

Web site: [www.unumprovident.com/enroll/pebb](http://www.unumprovident.com/enroll/pebb)

#### VSP

(Vision Service Plan)

Phone: (800) 877-7195

Web site: [www.vsp.com](http://www.vsp.com)

#### Willamette Dental Insurance

(Dental Plan)

Phone: (800) 460-7644

Web site: [www.willametedental.com](http://www.willametedental.com)

# A Guide to Your ID Numbers

To comply with federal privacy laws, employers, insurance carriers and healthcare providers have moved away from using Social Security numbers (SSNs) to identify employees, members and patients. Most made the transition at the end of 2004. Now, PEBB members need to know how to find their way through a maze of new ID numbers. Here's a guide.

## May is National Asthma Month

*(Continued from page 3)*

Control medicines should be used daily, but some – often teenagers – don't like to use them, thinking it makes them appear weak. The flyer clearly explains why it's important to follow the daily schedule. It also advises people to connect with their healthcare provider if attacks become more frequent, severe or less-responsive to rescue medicine.

If you or a dependent has asthma, ask your healthcare provider for "Helping You Keep Your Asthma under Control." If she doesn't have them, urge her to contact the Department of Human Services for copies. Then talk about how you can take charge of the condition to improve the quality of your life.

## State and University Numbers

For payroll and personnel purposes, the state assigns a unique employee number (beginning with the letters OR) to each agency employee. Each Oregon University System campus also assigns a unique employee number to its employees.

PEBB assigns a Benefit Number (beginning with the letter P) to each member and covered dependent when they become eligible for benefits. PEBB notified members of these numbers on the confirmation statement they received in March.

It's a good idea to write your PEBB Benefit Number on any ID card issued by your plans' carriers. Then it will be handy if you call PEBB with questions about your benefits. It's also the number you will use when you first register to use the State of Health Online, at [www.wellmed.com/stateofhealth](http://www.wellmed.com/stateofhealth), and [pebb.benefits](http://pebb.benefits), the new online benefit management system PEBB will roll out this year.

## Carrier Numbers

Kaiser Permanente assigns a unique number for each of its members. It is printed on each member's ID card.

Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon assigns a unique number (beginning with the letters YVP) to individuals covered in its preferred-provider organization (PPO) plans. The number is on the employee-member's ID card.

VSP provides routine vision services to members of the full-time PPO. VSP doesn't provide an ID card. To access care, employees and covered dependents use the PEBB-assigned Benefit Number that begins with the letter P.

PEBB members with dental coverage through ODS received an ID card from the company this year. The card identifies members using the PEBB-assigned Benefit Number that begins the letter P.

Willamette Dental has its own unique numbering system, but does not print the number on its ID cards. Covered members access care using the covered-employee's name.

YOUR ID NUMBERS			
Provided by	Beginning letter(s)	Printed on	Use for
DAS Personnel	OR	Personnel memo	Payroll, personnel systems
OUS universities	—	Varies	Banner system
PEBB	P	Confirmation statement	Registering for State of Health online and <a href="http://pebb.benefits">pebb.benefits</a> .
VSP	P	Confirmation statement	Access to VSP services
Kaiser Permanente	—	ID card	Access to covered services
Regence BCBSO	YVP	ID card	Access to covered services
ODS	P	ID card	Access to covered services
Willamette Dental	—	Not printed on ID card	Use employee name to access services.

# Medical carrier online services

## Kaiser Permanente

To help PEBB members build their relationship with their healthcare providers, Kaiser Permanente now offers Personal Health Link. This secure Web site lets members communicate with their doctor's office about non-urgent matters.

Personal Health Link also lets members view certain parts of their health electronic medical record, including health conditions, past visits, current medications and immunizations. It also allows them to contact an advice nurse or pharmacist with non-urgent

questions or requests, and to cancel routine appointments. Kaiser Permanente plans to add more features in the future, such as providing lab results.

Personal Health Link helps members take a more active role in their healthcare. They can use it any time, any day, from the convenience of their computer.

## Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon

Regence BCBSO's online services allow members to search for medical and pharmacy claims made during the last 18 months.

They can also check on their and their dependents' eligibility, and authorize covered dependents to access the site.

PEBB members should know that this service is available to Regence BCBSO's entire membership, including individuals and other groups. So, some of the site links do not apply to PEBB. Examples include the site's forms and update services. PEBB members must use PEBB forms to update and/or make changes in PEBB-sponsored plans.

## Carriers offer pill-splitting options

Both Kaiser Permanente and Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon offer pill-splitting options for PEBB members. For certain drugs, splitting tablets may offer savings for members who choose to do so in consultation with their healthcare provider.

Many medications come in different strengths that are similarly priced. For some medications, providers may be comfortable prescribing double-strength tablets. By splitting the pills, you can get the dose and strength you need at a savings.

The Regence Half-tablet program applies to retail (not mail order) purchase of the following drugs:

- Citalopram (generic for Celexa®)
- Crestor®
- Lipitor®
- Paroxetine (generic for Paxil®)
- Zocor®
- Zoloft®.

Regence BCBSO will cover the cost of a tablet splitter each year, when it is submitted as a claim by the pharmacist. Members in Regence PPO plans should discuss their own needs when a provider prescribes one of the drugs in the Half-tablet program.



Kaiser Permanente providers work with their patients to determine which medications are a good fit for splitting based on the patient's needs. Kaiser Permanente pharmacies will provide members with a tablet splitter at no charge when a new prescription involves half tablets. On member request, they will also provide a replacement splitter at no charge.

## Did You Know?

*(Continued from page 1)*

the Internet for research. Accurate communication of information, such as the use of e-prescribing, can significantly reduce medical errors.

With all these benefits, why isn't IT used everywhere in the healthcare system? There are a variety of reasons:

- Implementing new technology is costly
- The healthcare industry is fragmented, and there aren't widespread standards governing the use of technology
- Some providers resist the change technology would impose on their practices
- Privacy concerns about the electronic transmission of patient information are significant.

But change is in the air.

Healthcare purchasers – including PEBB – are beginning to demand that providers at least begin the transition. PEBB's request for proposals for medical services for 2006 asked respondents to tell where they are in the transition and show that they have credible plans. Some insurers are starting to offer financial incentives for the use of technology. The federal government is encouraging the development and adoption of standards for information technology. And patient advocates and the healthcare industry are working to make systems as secure as possible.

## What does it look like?

Patients, doctors and hospitals have found many innovative uses of technology in healthcare. Here is a snapshot of how IT is improving the healthcare system:

- **Electronic Medical Records** (EMRs) replace the thick paper file at your doctor's office. An EMR, available to your doctor on a computer in her office, will contain a variety of information including a record of your care as well as medication you're taking.
- **E-mail** is helping doctors communicate with patients, answering questions quickly and efficiently.
- **PDA**s give providers immediate access to information about diagnoses and medications.
- **E-prescribing** through computerized systems allows doctors to reduce medication errors.
- **Internet research** can give patients valuable information about health conditions and options for treatment. As long as you're using credible Web sites, research can help you ask informed questions and work with your provider to make better decisions.

While the pace of change may be slow, the widespread adoption of health IT is inevitable. Do your part. The next time you see your doctor, ask her what IT her practice uses and what plans she has for the future.

*“With computers we can make sure patients have all of their healthcare information available to them and their doctors whenever and wherever it is needed. We know information technology can improve quality and reduce cost, but we must be certain that the data are secure and we protect privacy. This future is not too far away!”*

*– Jody Pettit, M.D.*

## Resources

For more information about IT and healthcare, visit these Web sites:

- The California Healthcare Foundation at [www.chcf.org](http://www.chcf.org)
- The Markle Foundation's Connecting for Health Initiative at [www.connectingforhealth.org](http://www.connectingforhealth.org)
- The eHealth Initiative at [www.ehealthinitiative.org](http://www.ehealthinitiative.org)
- The National Health Information Infrastructure at [www.aspe.hhs.gov/sp/nhii](http://www.aspe.hhs.gov/sp/nhii)

## Public Meetings

The Benefit Board and its subcommittees usually meet monthly. Times and locations are subject to change. For schedules, please check the Meetings section of the PEBB Web site: [oregon.gov/DAS/PEBB/meetings.shtml](http://oregon.gov/DAS/PEBB/meetings.shtml).

*(Please follow agency policy on use of the Internet at work.)*

# PEBB Health Center Update

775 Court St. NE • Salem, OR 97301

(800) 701-1333 • [www.pebbhealth.org](http://www.pebbhealth.org) • (503) 362-1111 • [pebbhealth@oregonwellness.com](mailto:pebbhealth@oregonwellness.com)

Outside the Salem area? Call the Health Center to arrange a class or health screening at your worksite.

## Programs at the PEBB Health Center

Registration required. Handouts may be available if you are unable to attend. Check the Health Center Web site at [www.pebbhealth.org](http://www.pebbhealth.org) for updates. *(Please follow agency rules on use of the Internet at work.)* Feel free to bring a meal to any of these classes.

### Allergies vs. Asthma

**Presenter:** Liz Marik, FNP

**Date:** Tues., May 10, 12-1 p.m.

Find out the differences between asthma and allergies, how they can affect each other and treatment options for both.

### Living with Arthritis

**Presenter:** Liz Marik, FNP

**Date:** Tues., May 17, 12-1 p.m.

You're not alone – more than a quarter of us have arthritis. Learn treatment options and ways to live your best.

### How to Live with Diabetes

**Presenter:** Denise Cedar, RD, CDE

**Date:** Tues., May 24, 12-1 p.m.

What are the most important things you can do to manage your diabetes day-to-day? Learn what really counts.

### Stressed?

**Presenter:** Cyndi Aerni, MA

**Date:** Thurs., May 26, 12-1 p.m.

Managing life's stresses can be a challenge. Learn about stress' effects and how to reduce its impact on your life.

### Contain Your Garden for Healthy Eating

**Presenter:** Cindy Clifford, Master Gardener

**Date:** Thurs., June 2, 12-1 p.m.

Improve your health and nurture yourself with fresh-grown vegetables and flowers from your own container garden.

### Smoking Cessation

**Presenter:** Carolyn Buel, ANP

**Date:** Tues., June 7, 12-1 p.m.

Evaluate your readiness to quit, and learn about nicotine replacement therapy in PEBB's free tobacco cessation pilot program.

### Am I Having a Heart Attack?

**Presenter:** Jeanine Olson, ANP

**Date:** Thurs., June 16, 12-1 p.m.

Learn how women's and men's symptoms differ and how to decrease your risks – it could save your life or the life of a loved one.

### Oh My Aching Back

**Presenter:** Jennifer Truax, PT,  
Certified Athletic Trainer

**Date:** Wed., Jun 22, 5:15-6:15 p.m.

Work doesn't have to be a pain in the back. Learn simple exercises to do at work to undo the toll on your only lifelong investment – you.



The PEBB Health Center's lending library has materials related to these topics and more. Call or e-mail for a library card so you can take advantage of the resources available to all PEBB members.

## Get SASsy with the Summer Adventure Series!

### Stepping Up (Walking & Running)

**Presenter:** John Gallagher

**Date:** Tues., Jun. 28, 12-1 p.m.

If you're already a walker, maybe running is the next step. This expert can help you get started.

### White Water and Sea Kayaking

**Presenter:** Kay Mattson, ACA  
Certified White-water  
Instructor

**Date:** Thurs., Jun. 30

5:15-6:45 p.m.

Learn with it takes to get started in these water sports. Inspirational video, slides and resources.

### Know your Numbers

**Presenter:** Carolyn Buel, ANP, and  
Liz Marik, FNP

**Wed., June 15:** What do all your health screening numbers mean?

**Tues., June 21:** Now that you know your numbers, what can you do about them?

### Men's Health Week

**Date:** Jun. 27-Jul. 1

Call now to schedule a free health screening and consultation with a Nurse Practitioner. Learn what personal health concerns you should be aware of at different stages of your life.

### Nutrition, Lifestyle & Health

**Presenter:** Linda Spaulding, Certified  
Nutrition Consultant and  
Educator

**Dates:** Thurs., 5:15-6:15 p.m.

**May 5:** Well-balanced meal replacements and probiotics.

**Jun. 2:** Be active to improve your mental and physical health.

## PEBB Mission

To provide a high quality plan of health and other benefits that are affordable to both the employee and the state.