Our commitment to quality and patient safety

Kaiser Permanente is a health care system that provides and coordinates patient care. It includes Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Northwest. Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Northwest contracts with Northwest Permanente, P.C., Physicians and Surgeons (a medical group) for physician services. Northwest Permanente physicians provide about 97 percent of the primary care our members receive. They also provide more than 86 percent of the specialty care.

Our vision is to provide safe, quality care and to continue to improve the value we provide to our members.

Care quality

Measurement and improvement

We measure the quality of care we provide our members so that we can continuously improve it. To do this, we use a range of techniques and processes that measure:

• How effective treatment is for each member.
• How satisfied members are with our services.
• How efficiently we function at all levels.
• How appropriately we use our resources to improve the health of our members.

Our electronic medical records provide a wealth of information on the health status of our members. This information helps us check how well we care for members with certain chronic medical conditions.

We review how many members get recommended preventive care. We then set goals for improved results. We develop programs to achieve those goals. We regularly compare our performance with our goals. We make changes when they are needed.

We regularly ask members how they feel about the quality of care they receive. Their answers help us know when and how to improve the way we provide care. We make improvements in many areas, from the way we answer the telephone to how doctors explain medical information.

NCQA accreditation

The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) is an independent, nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C. Its mission is to improve the quality of health care.

NCQA accreditation is a voluntary review. It evaluates how we make sure our members receive high-quality care. NCQA’s team of trained health care experts, including physicians, conducts thorough on-site surveys. The team looks at many areas, including:

• How we review the professional qualifications and member-opinion surveys of our health care providers.
• How we help members stay healthy and get preventive care.
• How we make care and services accessible to members.
• How we care for members when they become sick.
• How we care for members with chronic conditions.

NCQA has accredited our Northwest Region’s commercial HMO health plan since 1995. In 2010, we received “Excellent” accreditation, NCQA’s highest accreditation level, for our HMO and Medicare product lines. Accreditation is subject to renewal every three years.

HEDIS® performance measures

We have helped develop and improve HEDIS® (Health Plan Employer Data and Information Set)* since its introduction in 1991. HEDIS is the nation’s leading tool for measuring the quality and service of managed care. HEDIS reports make it easier for people to evaluate and compare health plans.

HEDIS provides a look at these characteristics of a health plan:

• Quality of care.
• Member access and satisfaction.
• Members’ use of services.
• Health plan stability.

Professional credentialing

We have high standards for our health care providers. Because there are many applicants for most positions, we can be selective. All applicants must meet rigorous credentialing standards. We learn about their education, training, residencies, board certification, and quality of care by searching state and federal databases.

Once hired, our health care providers undergo periodic review by peers and hospital boards. This review makes sure that credentials are up-to-date and in order. Our group medical practice makes it easier for our health care providers to collaborate. They work with each other on decisions about patient care and review each other’s performance. Input from our patients is also an important part of performance review and credentialing.

*HEDIS® is a registered trademark of NCQA.
Patient safety
A top priority
Patient safety is one of our top priorities. It is a critical component of all our quality-improvement programs.

We have many systems in place to help reduce the possibility of errors. Here are some examples:

- **Medication safety protocols.**
- **Ongoing staff education and training.**
- **An infrastructure that promotes responsible reporting of patient safety concerns.**
- **Staff alert systems.** For example, our medication reporting system lets us know about potentially harmful drug interactions so that we can prevent them.
- **Best practices.** Our health care providers learn the best patient safety practices from the experiences of their Kaiser Permanente colleagues nationwide.

Our patient safety philosophy
At Kaiser Permanente, we care about your health and safety. You are the most important part of your health care team.

We believe that:

- Patient safety comes first.
- Patient safety is every patient’s right.
- Patient safety is every employee’s responsibility.

We are committed to being your partner to provide safe care. As you prepare for your appointments, write down any questions you may have for your doctor.

Here are some general questions to get you started:
- What is my main problem?
- What do I need to do about it?
- Why is it important for me to do this?*

Our patient safety program
We are dedicated to providing care that is reliable, effective, consistent, and safe. Our patient safety program focuses on six areas: safe culture, safe care, safe staff, safe support systems, safe place, and safe patients.

Recently, national patient safety leaders described our patient safety program as one of the pockets of success in the United States.

Reporting patient safety or quality of care concerns
We encourage members to report any health care safety or quality concerns they may have to hospital management. If the hospital cannot resolve concerns, we refer members to the Joint Commission Hospital Quality Check.

The Joint Commission Complaint Hotline is 1-800-994-6610.
The Joint Commission Complaint e-mail address is complaint@jointcommission.org. The Joint Commission Web site is jointcommission.org.

Additional performance data
More Kaiser Permanente quality performance data is available at the following Web sites:

NCQA’s Health Plan Report Card
National Committee for Quality Assurance
1100 13th Street NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20005
202-955-3500

For hospital information, including patient safety:

The Joint Commission Hospital Quality Check
One Renaissance Blvd.
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181
630-792-5000
qualitycheck.org

Hospital Compare
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201
202-619-0257
1-877-696-6775 (toll free)
hospitalcompare.hhs.gov

The Leapfrog Group’s Hospital Quality and Safety Survey Results
The Leapfrog Group
c/o Academy Health
1150 17th Street NW, Suite 600
Washington, D.C. 20036
202-292-6713
leapfroggroup.org

Oregon Hospital Quality Indicators
Oregon Health Policy and Research
255 Capitol St. NE, Fifth Floor
Salem, OR 97310
503-373-1574

Questions?
If you have questions or need help, call Membership Services. We’re available by telephone 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. Members may also sign on to kp.org and send us an e-mail.

Portland area . . . . . . 503-813-2000
All other areas . . . . 1-800-813-2000

TTY
All areas . . . . . . . . . 1-800-735-2900

Language interpretation services
All areas . . . . . . . . . 1-800-324-8010

*Adapted with permission from Ask Me 3 by the Partnership for Clear Health Communication.