Quality at Kaiser Permanente in Northern California

Keeping you healthy is at the heart of everything we do. At Kaiser Permanente, you can count on the support of a team of health care professionals, all working together to provide you with care personalized to meet your needs. You also have access to a wide range of technology and online resources designed to help you manage your health care and stay your healthiest.

A proven quality leader

Here’s just some of the recognition we’ve received from independent organizations about the high quality of our care.

- A perfect four stars for quality of care, higher than any other health plan in California—Office of the Patient Advocate: 2012 Healthcare Quality Report Card,1 opa.ca.gov
- Top health plan in California and ranked among the nation’s Top 10—National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) Health Insurance Plan Rankings 2012–13—Private,2 ncqa.org
- A “Top Performer” in California—Integrated Healthcare Association (IHA),3 iha.org

To learn more about our commitment to quality, please visit kp.org/quality.

Keeping quality as our goal

To make sure we continue improving our care, we’ve created groups to develop, manage, and evaluate our efforts. These groups include:
- The boards of directors of our health plan and hospitals, which govern our quality improvement process. They develop policies to guide the organization, establish and monitor strategic goals and performance, and select key leaders.
- Our Northern California Quality Oversight Committee (QOC), which is sponsored by the associate executive director for quality of The Permanente Medical Group, Inc., and by the health plan and hospitals’ vice president for quality. Physicians and nonphysicians serve on this committee. The QOC sets priorities, evaluates and monitors quality improvement programs, makes policy recommendations, and creates programs to deal with quality-of-care issues. The QOC reports regularly to the boards of directors. At least once a year, the committee reviews and adopts our quality program description, program evaluation, and work plan.

How we monitor our progress

At Kaiser Permanente, we continually work to improve the quality of our care. And we’re pleased to share the results of our efforts, which are periodically ranked against those of other health care providers in the communities we serve.

We participate in several independent reports on quality of care, so you have reliable information comparing our performance to that of other health plans. For example, we report complete, audited information on the effectiveness of our care, including asthma and diabetes management measures, to NCQA’s Health Plan Employer Data and Information Set (HEDIS®).4 We also participate in the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS®) program,5 which NCQA uses to measure member satisfaction.

Additional information about measuring quality of care and service can be found at kp.org/measuringquality.

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Improving quality and service

Each year we develop strategic clinical and service goals to help us improve your health care. Our clinical goals include efforts to improve our members’ health in these key areas:

• asthma treatment
• cancer screening and prevention for breast cancer, cervical cancer, and colorectal cancer
• cardiovascular health, including blood pressure, diabetes, and cholesterol management
• depression treatment
• osteoporosis management
• patient safety

The service you get from us is an important part of your health care experience. To help make sure you receive quality service, we’re focused on providing a helpful and courteous staff and enhancing your satisfaction in the following ways:

• making sure you find the right personal physician
• offering you personalized care and service
• providing you with improved access through convenient channels to care for all your medical needs

Progress in meeting annual goals

One of our goals each year is helping members with high cholesterol and hypertension bring their conditions under control—and we continue to increase success rates in these areas. To do this, our physicians and other health care professionals use a variety of tools and processes to improve care for members who are dealing with these conditions. We’ve also increased our screening rates for colorectal cancer, and we’re encouraged by our continued improvements in the treatment of depression and the growing rate of children who are immunized at Kaiser Permanente.

Patient safety

At Kaiser Permanente, we care about your health and safety. We have many systems in place to help minimize the chance of errors. These include medication safety programs, team training, effective communication techniques, and reporting programs to help us identify areas where errors can occur. We’ve also found ways to identify which patient safety practices are most effective and communicate these practices to facilities throughout Kaiser Permanente.

We believe empowering members enhances their safety and medical experience. If you have any questions or concerns about your safety or care, please speak with your health care team. If you don’t understand any of the responses to your questions, ask again until the answer is clear. Also make sure you know all the medications you’re taking and why you’re taking them. And educate yourself about your diagnosis and any medical tests you’re undergoing. When you undergo an outpatient procedure or are hospitalized, ask a trusted family member or friend to stay with you and be your support person.

You’re at the center of your care team, and our goal is always to provide you with the best and safest care possible.

Your physicians and other care team members

Our medical professionals are dedicated to providing compassionate, personalized care. And they’re selected through a rigorous hiring process: In California, only 1 in 10 applicants is hired as a Kaiser Permanente physician. This helps ensure that we select skilled medical staff with whom you’ll want to build long-term relationships. Once they join Kaiser Permanente, the members of your care team receive ongoing training in their specialties and in general patient care. This includes cultural sensitivity training, new-technology education, and thorough reviews of our accepted best practices, which are some of the procedures we’ve found to be most effective in promoting quality care.
Learn about your personal practitioner online

You can learn more about your health care practitioner, including education and board certification information, by visiting our practitioners’ home pages at kp.org/doctorsandlocations. If you haven’t already selected a personal practitioner or would like to change your practitioner, you can do so there. Make sure to register first at kp.org/register to use our secure online features.

Advancing research and technology

Our efforts to enhance your care don’t happen only at our medical offices and medical centers. Many improvements come directly from what we do in our research laboratories. Our physicians and researchers have developed innovative programs and technologies that are used every day in hospitals and clinics across the country. Our research in important areas like colon cancer, osteoporosis, heart disease, and immunizations has led to new methods of screening and treating millions of people.

We’re also a leader in health information technology. You and your care team can get updated information through technology ranging from the electronic health records used at our hospitals and medical offices to our interactive online tools designed to help you manage your health.

Need additional information?

For more information about our quality program, please contact Alan Whippy, MD, medical director of quality and safety for The Permanente Medical Group, Inc., at 510-625-4548. If you have questions about your care or the care of a loved one, please contact the Member Services department at your local Kaiser Permanente facility.

1Kaiser Permanente Northern California earned the top marks in the 2012 Healthcare Quality Report Card from the California Office of the Patient Advocate. It was the only health plan in California to earn a four-star rating in the report’s overall comparison of clinical performance, including four-star ratings for excellence in cancer screening and diabetes, heart, maternity, mental health, and asthma and lung care.

2Out of 538 private plans ranked by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) in its Health Insurance Plan Rankings 2011–12—Private, Northern California Region was ranked highest in California, and eighth in the nation. Kaiser Permanente Northern California Region and Kaiser Permanente Southern California Region were the only California health plans ranked in the nation’s Top 10.

3The Permanente Medical Group was ranked among the top 25 percent of all California physician groups for its performance on a variety of quality measures, including preventive care, chronic care management, patient satisfaction, and the use of technology, by the Integrated Healthcare Association (IHA), a nonprofit organization that manages the nation’s largest pay-for-performance program for physicians.

4HEDIS® is a registered trademark of the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).

5CAHPS® is a registered trademark of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).