



Coordination of Benefits

Primary and secondary coverage

Many families today carry more than one group health plan, often when both spouses are employed. If this is true in your case, the two plans will coordinate payment of your medical charges. This is based on a system that considers one of the plans to be the *primary plan* and the other the *secondary plan*.

Primary and secondary plans

A plan is primary if it covers the patient as an employee. A plan is secondary if it covers the patient as a dependent. This means that when you receive medical care, your Meritain Health plan is always primary and the other plan is always secondary. Also, when your covered spouse receives care, his or her employer's plan is always primary, and your Meritain Health plan is always secondary.

Birthday rule

But which plan is primary for your dependent children? The birthday rule makes the answer to this question simple.

Under the birthday rule, the parent who has the first birthday in the year carries the primary coverage for all dependent children. The parent whose birthday falls later in the year carries the secondary coverage.

So, if one parent's birthday is January 12 and the other parent's birthday is any date after January 12 (that is, a date between January 13 and December 31) the parent with the January 12 birthday will be the primary payer for the dependents. In the uncommon case that both parents have the same birthday, the policy that has been in effect the longest for the child will be primary.

Coordination of benefits under two plans

When you submit claims to your primary Meritain Health plan, it will pay benefits without considering benefits that may be provided by the secondary plan. Your Meritain Health plan then will send you an Explanation of Benefits (EOB), which you may submit with a claim form to your secondary plan.

In most cases, the secondary plan will pay an amount that, when combined with the amount paid by the primary plan, doesn't exceed the amount the secondary plan would have paid if it were primary.

For example, let's pretend that your employed spouse incurs a \$100 medical charge. His or her medical plan is primary since he or she is the employee. Your Meritain Health plan is secondary.

- Your spouse's plan will cover 70 percent of the \$100 charge, paying \$70 to your spouse's doctor.
- Assume your Meritain Health plan would have covered 80 percent of the expense if it was the primary plan.
- As the secondary plan, your Meritain Health plan will cover the difference between the 70 and 80 percents. This 10 percent difference would be paid out as \$10.

If you have questions, simply call Meritain Health Customer Service using the phone number on your member ID Card.