

HEALTH

HEALTHWATCH

Cancer Resource Center -- Providence St. Vincent Medical Center and the American Red Cross have joined forces to create the first in-hospital resource center providing books, printed material, computer access and more for individuals and families dealing with cancer. The center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Lead Poisoning Prevention -- Learn how to protect your family from lead poisoning. Ideal for folks in live in older homes with children or pregnant women. Qualified participants receive a free kit of safety and testing supplies. Call 503-284-6827.

Parenting Classes -- Newborns don't come with instruction manuals but parents and parents-to-be can learn about a variety of topics from pain and childbirth to breastfeeding to infant CPR and much more. For a schedule of events, call 503-574-6595 or visit: providence.org/classes.

Heart Talk Support Group -- Meets on the second Monday of each month; from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, call 503-251-6260.

Families with Mental Illness -- A free, 12-week course for people whose family members live with mental illness is offered at Emanuel Hospital, Mt. Hood Medical Center and Providence Medical Center. The course has been described as "life-changing" by former participants. Registration is required by calling 503-203-3326.

Chronic Pain Support Group -- Meets the first Wednesday at 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and the third Wednesday of each month, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. For more information, call 503-256-4000.

Cardiac-Rehab Exercises -- A medically supervised exercise program for people dealing with heart conditions. For information, call 503-251-6260.

Health Insurance Form Simplified

Paperwork is for benefits under health care law

(AP) — The first draft was as mind-numbing as a tax form. Tuesday the Obama administration unveiled simplified application forms for health insurance benefits coming next year under the federal health care overhaul.

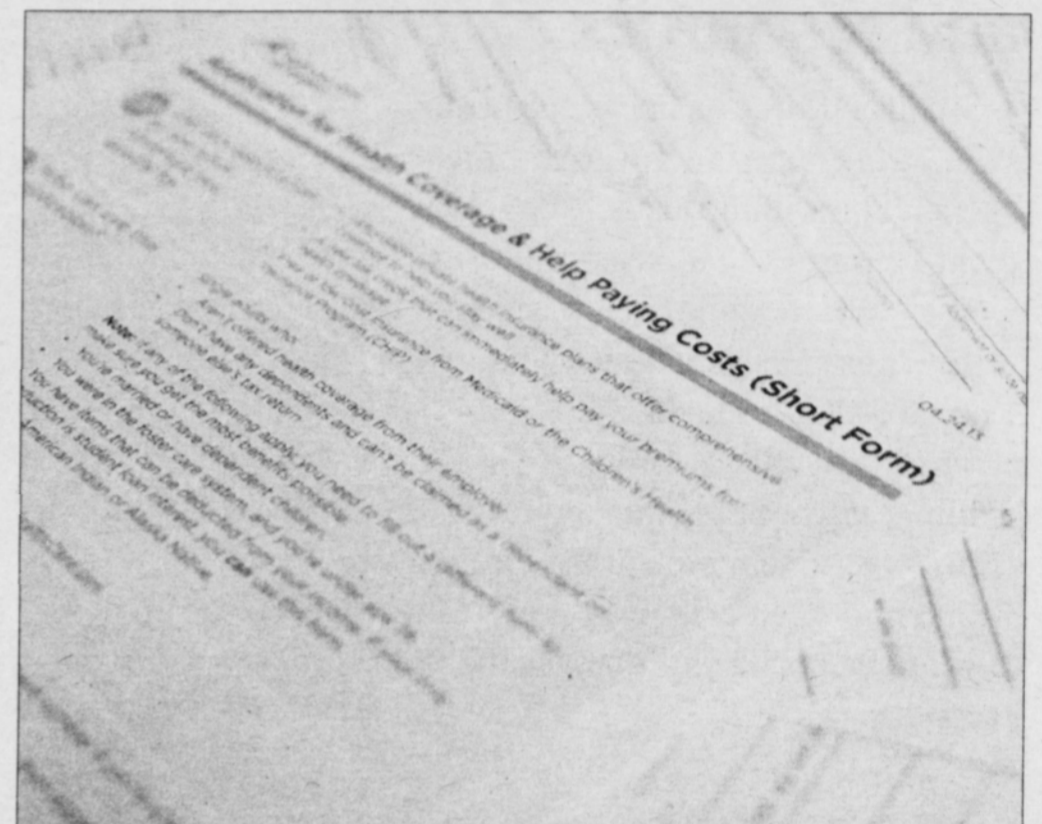
The biggest change: a five-page short form that single people can fill out. That total includes a cover page with instructions, and an extra page to fill out if you want to designate someone to help you through the process.

But the application form for families still runs to 12 pages, although most households will not have to fill out each and every page.

The paperwork takes on added importance because Americans remain confused about what President Barack Obama's health care overhaul will mean for them. A Kaiser Family Foundation poll released Tuesday found that 4 in 10 are unaware it's the law of the land. Some think it's been repealed by Congress, but in fact, it's still on track.

At his news conference Tuesday, Obama hailed the simplified forms as an example of how his team listened to criticism from consumer groups and made a fix. The law's benefits will be available to all Americans, he emphasized, even if Republicans in Congress still insist on repeal, and many GOP governors won't help put it into place.

When the first draft of the applica-



This application shows the short form for the new federal Affordable Care Act. The first draft was as mind-numbing as a tax form. Tuesday the Obama administration unveiled simplified application forms.

tion turned out to be a clunker, "immediately, everybody sat around the table and said, 'Well, this is too long, especially...in this age of the Internet,'" Obama recounted. "People aren't going to have the patience to sit there for hours on end. Let's streamline this thing."

Consumers will start getting familiar with the new applications less than six months from now, on Oct. 1, when new insurance markets open for enrollment in every state. Most people with job-based benefits will not have to bother with the applica-

tions, only the uninsured.

Under the law, middle-class people who don't get coverage through their jobs will be able to purchase private insurance. Most will be able to get tax credits, based on their incomes, to make their premiums more affordable. Low-income uninsured people will be steered to government programs like Medicaid.

Benefits begin Jan. 1, and nearly 30 million uninsured Americans are eventually expected to get coverage.

Caffeine Energy Boosts Investigated

(AP) — For people seeking an energy boost, companies are increasing their offerings of foods with added caffeine. A new caffeinated gum may have gone too far.

The Food and Drug Administration said Monday that it will investigate the safety of added caffeine and its effects on children and adolescents. The agency made the announcement just as Wrigley was rolling out Alert Energy Gum, a new product that includes as much caffeine as a half a cup of coffee in one piece and promises "the right energy, right now."

Michael Taylor, FDA's deputy commissioner of foods, indicated that the proliferation of new foods with caffeine added — especially the gum, which he equates to "four cups of coffee in your pocket" — may even prompt the FDA to look closer at the way all food ingredients are regulated.

The agency is already investigating the safety of energy drinks and energy shots, prompted by consumer reports of illness and death.

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